

PlayStation ■ PC CD-ROM ■ 3DO ■ Saturn ■ 32X ■ Ultra 64 ■ Jaguar ■ Arcade ■ On-Line

NEXT GENERATION

Leading edge computer and video games

August 1995

Sega Saturn

you've watched the
TV commercials

now
read the
facts

Ultra 64
Nintendo's
President
talks

A game machine to drool over? The

full, hype-free guide starts on p.26

"The Theater Of The Eye" TV campaign for Sega Saturn (in 3D and 2D sound flavors) by Goodby, Silverstein and Partners. As part of Sega's aggressive \$50 million bid to race ahead of Sony, it aims to "create a yearning for the experience of playing Sega Saturn"

volume one

08

\$4.99



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Revolutionary: It's the best 32-bit game yet — explore *Jumping Flash* for the Sony PlayStation on page 68



Let the show begin

With the surprise US launch of **Sega Saturn** on May 11, Sega of America fired the **first live round** of the 1995 videogame wars.

Now gamers face a **choice**.

Do they wait until **September 9** for the launch of **Sony's PlayStation?**

Do they wait until **April 1996** for **Nintendo's Ultra 64?**

Do they buy a **3DO** and hope that The 3DO Company will eventually announce a **concrete** price or release date for the mythical **M2?**

Or...

Maybe they buy into the next generation right now.

In the US there exists a **pent-up demand** for cutting-edge videogame technology — thousands of gamers have \$400 already earmarked for a next generation purchase.

The fact that **unofficially imported** PlayStations and Saturns have been selling for as much as **\$800** direct from **Tokyo** is proof of a demand far greater than 3DO and Atari's ability to satisfy it.

And now, **alone** in the marketplace, Sega has these people all to **itself**.

But at what **cost** was Sega's surprise launch?

And why are so many gamers **skeptical** of Saturn's appeal?

The hype-free guide to **Sega Saturn** starts on page 28.

NEXT GENERATION

August 1995

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NEXT Generation (ISSN# 1078-9693) is published by Imagine Publishing, Inc., Suite 210, 1350 Old Bayshore Highway, Burlingame, CA 94010, USA. Application to mail at second-class postage rates pending at Burlingame, CA, and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster send changes of address to NEXT Generation, PO Box 53684, Boulder, CO, 80322-3684. Newsstand distribution is handled by Curtis Circulation Company. Subscriptions: one year (12 issues) US \$34, Canada \$46, foreign \$58. Canadian price includes postage and GST (GST# R 128 220688).

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Produced in the United States of America.

NEXT Generation and EDGE in a tree, K.I.S.S.I.N.G. Congratulations Tim and Audrey! Stay cool, Matt the supervisor. I do not like green eggs and ham, I will not...



Howard Lincoln: Why the hell has Nintendo delayed Ultra 64?

Of all the next generation game systems, Nintendo's Ultra 64 is the hottest box of silicon still in development. But with Saturn already "out there" and PlayStation set to break all sales records this fall, how can Nintendo afford to keep Ultra 64 in the wings?



Sega Saturn: What the TV commercials don't tell you

You've seen the TV commercials, now read the facts. Since Sega's surprise release of Saturn on May 11, NEXT Generation has been inundated with questions from gamers wanting the real story behind Sega's \$50 million marketing blitz. Here are the answers



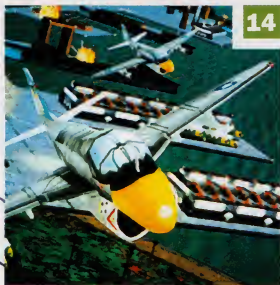
Japanese RPGs: coming to a games machine near you

Did *Mortal Kombat* and *Doom* really take over the world? Not quite. Japan remained uncontaminated by the outbreak of gore fever that engulfed the Western world, and instead continued playing its favorite game genre: the RPG. And now they're coming to America

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Alphas: 12 game previews

Previews of PlayStation's two-player link up. Peter Molyneux's Bullfrog unveils its 1995 line-up. First looks at: *Shin Shinobi Den* (Saturn), *Wing Arms* (Saturn), and *Air Combat* (PlayStation)



Finals: 53 new game reviews

It's a jungle out there, and locating that must-have game among the heaps of shovelware is never easy. That's where finals comes in: your essential reviews guide to the month's releases

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Howard Lincoln

Nintendo's president explains the delay of Ultra 64 — and why he'll still make more money than Sega

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Japanese RPGs

They're the most popular games in Japan, and now they're coming to a 32-bit console near you

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Alphas

From Japan, Europe, and the US: Your first look at the next generation games of tomorrow. Including: PlayStation's Head-to-head games, *VectorMan* (Genesis), *Duke Nukem 3D* (PC), *Shin Shinobi Den* (Saturn), *Wing Arms* (Saturn), *Terminal Velocity* (Saturn), *Air Combat* (PlayStation), and Bullfrog's 1996 lineup

68 rating

Finals

Your complete reviews guide to the month's release on all formats. Featuring: *Jumping Flash!* (PlayStation), *Pebble Beach Golf Links* (Saturn), *Tama* (Saturn), *Worldwide Soccer* (Saturn), *WWF Raw* (Sega 32X), *Slimy Jam '95* (3DO), *Savage Reign* (Neo-Geo), *Lost Eden* (PC), *Syndicate* (Macintosh), *Judge Dredd* (Genesis), *Romance* (SNES) and *Sega Rally Championship* (arcade)

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FOR SERIOUS
GAMERS ONLY.



NEO·GEO[®]CD



Don't Cross the Line Unless You're Serious.



Back in 1990, people "played Nintendo." It was the only game in town. More than two thirds of US homes owned a NES, and Nintendo's stranglehold on the gaming world seemed incontestable. But after a bloody 16-bit battle with Sega, Nintendo surrendered half its grip. Now, 3DO and Sony threaten to loosen the rest, so...



Why the hell has Nintendo delayed Ultra 64?



Howard Lincoln is president and CEO of Nintendo of America. Although soft-spoken and mild-mannered, anyone who has dared try to screw

Nintendo in a deal (or anyone who has read *Game Over*, David Sheff's history of "How Nintendo Conquered the World") will recognize in his gaze the steely will and uncompromising business brain of a genuine boardroom tiger.

While Nintendo will always remain a force to be reckoned with ("Never discount anyone with \$3 billion in the bank" warns Steve Race, Sony Computer Entertainment's president), the company's first half of 1995 has been bleak.

Virtual Boy has been universally criticized as an expensive gimmick, development of the much-hyped *FX Fighter* was abandoned — only Rare's powerful Super NES output (*Killer Instinct* and *Donkey Kong Country 2*) are the bright spots on a horizon increasingly dominated by rival consoles Saturn, PlayStation, and 3DO's M2.

NEXT Generation met with Howard Lincoln at the Electronic Entertainment Exposition (E³) in Los Angeles, just days after Sega's surprise launch of Saturn and the news that Ultra 64 would be delayed until 1996, to find out why Nintendo feels it's safe to give its competition such a head start.

Just wait until next year

NG: Why was Ultra 64 delayed?

Howard: The reason was a quality issue. Given the level of quality of 16-bit games like *Donkey Kong Country* and then *Killer Instinct* and *DKC2*, we felt that we needed more time to get the quality level [of Ultra 64 games] to the point where we were satisfied. The hardware is done — although there are always things which have to be tweaked — and SGI [Silicon Graphics Industries] did what it set out to do — creating the chips that we were all counting on — and we're very pleased.

I think it would have been a mistake to rush this product to the market. In this business you only get one cut at it, and I think gamers are very conscious of the quality of software. If the quality of 64-bit software is just a little bit better than 32-bit or 16-bit, gamers will recognize that, and they would be concerned about investing in a new hardware platform.

The other thing is that, given the kind of SNES games we've got coming in the back half of the year, you really have to question why we would also want to bring along 64-bit at the same time. With the strength of *DKC2* and *Killer Instinct*, it's just not necessary.

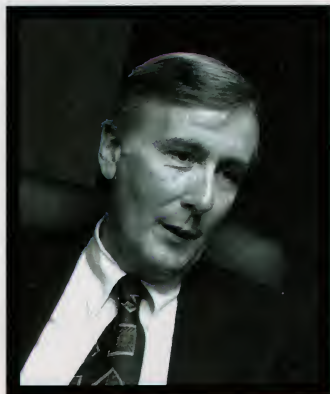
NG: So when you can still make a lot of cash on the 16-bit level, there's no need to introduce the next generation. Isn't it frustrating, then, that most of your third party developers haven't been able to take advantage of the SNES to the degree that a company like Rare can?

Howard: Well, I don't know that I would call it frustrating. I think it's disappointing, but in a way it's a reflection of the nature of this business — it's a very creative business. It's almost the same thing as saying, "Aren't you frustrated when everyone can't make a Steven Spielberg movie?"

There are a very limited number of people who have the ability to work with the technology, for example, SGI technology, and then also have that creative talent in that you can bring the two together. It would be nice

But where's the joy pad? Nintendo remains ultra-secretive about Ultra 64 even as its launch nears

The most powerful man in videogaming? Howard Lincoln's empire is under threat from Sony and Sega



talking

"The game controller that you see from Nintendo for Ultra 64 at the Shoshinkei show will knock your socks off. It's the first thing you'll see and will want to comment on. I can guarantee it"

if there were a lot of people who had that talent, but I'm fast coming to believe that there aren't — it just doesn't work that way.

NG: Everyone involved in the videogame business looked to the E³ show in Los Angeles to see how Nintendo, Sony, 3DO, and Sega would compare. Even with the announcement of the Ultra 64 launch delayed until April of 1996, did you think that this is a good show for Nintendo?

Howard: I thought we had a very good show. We had excellent meetings with the retailers and the financial analysts, and the morale of our employees and reps was very high. We've got something [*Killer Instinct* and *Donkey Kong Country 2*] we can make a lot of money on, which is really what the retailers are looking at. I think financial analysts recognize the same thing.

I think there have been some in the media who have been disappointed with the delay in the Ultra 64, and that's perfectly understandable because people like to focus on new technology, and what's new, and what's coming in, and all of that. We really have no way of knowing how disappointed the gamers are.

NG: Hiroshi Yamauchi, the president of Nintendo Corporate Ltd. (NCL) has hinted in the videogame press that the Ultra 64 may, in fact, launch in Japan this December.

Howard: It's a possibility, and I am aware that Mr. Yamauchi has recently commented on that. Certainly, it is possible to launch a new hardware system in Japan in December. If the product is shown at the Shoshinkei show in late November, for example, it's logistically possible.

The US market is an entirely different market and if we were going to launch in November in the US, for example, we really have to be in a position where we can say that with 100% assurance to our dealers right now — because

the lead times are different for the US market. It's quite possible that NCL will launch in December in Japan, but I can assure you that Mr. Yamauchi is the person who is going to make that decision, not I. So, all I'm doing is merely speculating on what he may or may not do.

NG: But if the US market requires such advance warnings, how was Sega able to roll out the surprise launch of Saturn in May?

Howard: I'm certain that Sega has been working on its introductory launch for a number of months — it didn't just happen out of the blue. And because it was only working with a limited number of dealers, the company could do it with a degree of confidence that the secret would not slip out.

NG: Do you think that with the Ultra 64, the potential exists to gain the dominance you once had with the NES?

Howard: All of this is speculation, including what the market share of Sony and Sega will be on these new high-end systems. Everything remains to be seen. Certainly, all three companies are operating on the assumption that they're going to dominate in the market and that their product will be successful, but there are a lot of unknowns. Will, for example, consumers step up to a \$300 to 400 hardware system, let alone a \$250 hardware system? Nobody knows that.

Ultimately, I think if you had to pick what was the most important thing — price, marketing, or quality of games — I would put the quality of the games first, I'd put pricing second, and I'd put marketing third. And that comes back to why we delayed the launch of the Ultra 64 — the games have got to be much better.

CDs or cartridges?

NG: It's what hasn't been said about Ultra 64 which everyone is talking about. First, it's a cartridge machine, but Peter Main [Nintendo's VP of Marketing] said a year ago that there was a CD-ROM player in development planned for launch after Ultra 64. Is that still the case?

Howard: About three or four months ago, Mr. Yamauchi commented that Nintendo was working on a storage accessory for Ultra 64, and that product was not a CD-ROM player. A further announcement will be made by Mr. Yamauchi on that subject at some point in the future, but I can confirm that there is not a CD-ROM accessory planned for Ultra 64.

NG: Is Nintendo scared of CD-ROM technology? **Howard:** Nintendo and its engineers essentially regard CD-ROM as an inferior technology. There really isn't a question of being scared of it, it's a question of balancing the advantages of that technology against the disadvantages.

NG: But CDs are cheap, quick, easy to manufacture, and they also store tons of data. Surely the benefits outweigh any disadvantages?

Howard: There are certainly benefits to CD-ROM



storage, and I think we've weighed the benefits against the disadvantages. There is information about Nintendo's future that I obviously can't disclose to you today. In the near future it will be cleared up that we are not prejudiced for or against any particular storage medium.

NG: The single biggest advantage you have in keeping Ultra 64 at the "below \$250" price tag is the absence of a CD-ROM player from the Ultra 64 hardware. Was this a major factor in your decision to make the Ultra 64 cartridge-based?

Howard: It was one of the factors, I wouldn't categorize it as a significant factor. There is no question that the absence of a CD-ROM player reduces the cost of the hardware, but I don't think it was analyzed quite that way. There are some things I am told by Tom [Jermoluk, CEO of Silicon Graphics] as well as our engineers that the technology of Ultra 64 simply cannot be done using a CD-ROM player as a software storage medium. Don't ask me what it is because I don't know — I'm not a technical person.

NG: Very few people recognize the huge difference between developing 2D games and developing 3D games. How are the members of your Ultra 64 "dream team" working this out?

Howard: The work that we have seen is outstanding. Mr. [Genyu] Takeda, who is in charge of the Nintendo Ultra 64 project, is very, very pleased with what he has seen from these companies. Mr. Miyamoto is involved [with Angel Studios and Paradigm], as are other of our creative people from Kyoto.

NG: Ultra 64 was conceived as a 3D world creator, and obviously the joypads that we're used to are for 2D worlds — most people believe that a revolution needs to come in game controller design. Could you tell us more about how Ultra 64 games will be controlled?

Howard: You are very astute and you are very accurate. The game controller that you see from Nintendo for Ultra 64 at the Shoshinkei show will knock your socks off. It's the first thing you'll see and will want to comment on. I can guarantee it.

NG: Who designed it?

Howard: The controller is designed internally and it is everything that you just speculated on. When we produced the shots of the Ultra 64, you saw the cartridge and you saw the hardware, but you didn't see the game controller. Nintendo has a history of making really exceptional game controllers, whether it's an NES or a SNES, and you can expect history to repeat itself.

In fact, I'll tell you that of all of the aspects of Ultra 64, what I think that the game controller will be the cat's meow!

16-bit — the main event

NG: What parallels can be drawn between the launch of Saturn and Ultra 64 now, and the launch of the Genesis and Super NES five years ago?



Howard: Well, if there were any mistakes made in the launch of SNES, the timing a year and a half after the Genesis was not one of them. By the end of 1991, our installed base in the US 16-bit market was greater than Sega's, even though Sega had been there since 1989. It was after that point that Sega did a lot of things very well, in terms of pricing games like *Sonic the Hedgehog*, and in terms of marketing — television advertising and what not. I think the only parallel is that in addition to the necessity of having a powerful game platform, you have to have good games. It's got to be priced right and it's got to be marketed right.

Certainly this time around, Nintendo will prevail from the technology point of view — even I can add up that 64 is more powerful than 32. And marketing-wise, Sega and Sony are excellent companies. In the past three or four years, Sega has proven to be a very astute marketer of its videogame products, but I believe our marketing has improved also.

One major advantage we have over Sega — other than the fact that on a worldwide basis, our market share is much larger — is our financial condition. And that financial condition is only going to improve, given the fact that Sega — and for that matter Sony — are selling their new hardware platforms under cost, and that they are willing to lose a considerable amount of money [on each PlayStation or Saturn they sell]. Presumably, they hope to make it up or get even on the software, but that's a risky strategy because it involves millions and millions of dollars of losses that they will necessarily be incurring. Nintendo, on the other hand, is not going to be incurring any losses in the US. In 1995, we will be making a good margin on *Killer Instinct* and *DKC2* and so will our retailers.

Ultra 64 may not launch in 1995, but Lincoln claims that Nintendo's profits will still beat Sony and Sega

"I think it would have been a mistake to rush this product to the market. In this business you only get one cut at it, and I think gameplayers are very conscious of the quality of software"

talking

"If there were any mistakes made in the launch of SNES, the timing a year and a half after the Genesis was not one of them. By the end of 1991, our installed base in the US 16-bit market was greater than Sega's"

NG: While every other videogame company is focusing on 32-bit and 64-bit platforms, Nintendo's main business is, and will remain to be, 16-bit throughout the rest of 1995. Do you feel people have written off the 16-bit systems too early?

Howard: Yeah, I do. But the market for 16-bit has changed. One of the reasons it has changed is *Donkey Kong Country*. The downside of *Donkey Kong Country* is simply that once you launch a product like that, everything else has got to be as good. We are not launching a number of other 16-bit products for that very reason. The quality of games is now being measured against *Donkey Kong Country* and *Killer Instinct*. And it's the same with the third parties.

NG: We remember the glory days when the Super NES first launched with titles like *F-Zero*, *Pilotwings*, and *Super Mario World*.

Why were there never sequels to these great games? And why has it taken so long to match them in terms of quality?

Howard: There are a number of games and projects that Nintendo works on which do not see the light of day. There may well be sequels which I cannot tell you about or they are simply not public. The other reason is that people like Mr. [Shigeru] Miyamoto are not told "OK, you are now going to make a sequel to *Pilotwings*." That's not the way we treat our creative people — and for very good reason.

So a lot of it has to do with their own choice as to what they want to work on. Mr. Yamaguchi, in particular, has been very careful to [make sure that] it is really up to people like Mr. Miyamoto, Mr. [Gunpei] Yokoi, and Mr. Takeda, and their people, to decide the games they work on.



Howard Lincoln started his career with Nintendo as the company's attorney, avoiding lawsuits and cementing such crucial deals as the acquisition of *Tetris* for the Game Boy

The competition

NG: How do you perceive 3DO right now?

Howard: If anything has been proven beyond a shadow of a doubt by virtue of the 3DO fiasco, it has to be two things: One, that you only get one crack at this thing. You don't get repeated opportunities to get your product, your pricing, or your software right; the second thing is that you rely on other people to make good games. If you assume that these games will somehow fall out of the sky, you are going to be sorely disappointed.

The only thing that 3DO has successfully accomplished at this point in time is to sell a lot of development systems. But as near as I can tell, the

product has not been successful. Does that mean 3DO will never be successful in the future? Well, who knows about that. But it is

very difficult for me to conceive that 3DO is anything more than just a lot of hype.

NG: How about Sony?

Howard: We regard Sony as a legitimate competitor because it certainly has the financial resources to get into the market. And from a hardware standpoint, the company is quite capable of making excellent hardware systems. At this point, the jury is still out on its ability to make a videogame. Even though it has been in this business for some years now, Sony hasn't made what you would call a world class videogame. So that side of the coin remains to be seen.

NG: And Sega?

Howard: Sega is an excellent marketer of videogames, and certainly a fine company in terms of stability in videogames. It has the heritage of the coin-operated videogame experience. The people there know the difference between a good game and a bad game. So on that score, I think I would rate them very highly.

Over the past few years they have made a number of gambles to obtain increased market share by taking financial risks which now puts them in a more difficult position. And now there's a good deal of debt coming due. But Sega is going to remain a major part of the videogame business for the foreseeable future, and certainly in the US, Sega is to be complemented on the job that it has done, as well as for example, in the UK.

NG: Have you enjoyed the many battles with Sega over the years?

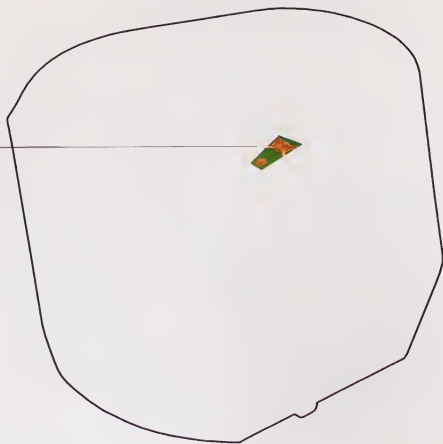
Howard: Yeah, I have enjoyed them, sure, but they're not personal.

NG: Would you speak with Tom Kalinske if you were to pass him in a corridor, for example?

Howard: Oh yeah, I like Tom a lot. I think he's a neat guy and I enjoy being around him. But we are competitors, and you know there are going to be times when I'm taking shots at him and he's going to be taking shots at me. But it's all just part of the game.



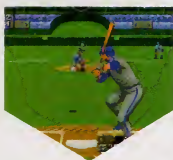
{ figure 1 }
A detailed view of
World Series Baseball.[®]



If you're going to take the field

{ figure 2 }
A detailed view of
Triple Play '96.





Ah, the sweet sound of
chin music. Now available in stereo.
Two batter/pitcher views to choose
from. Brush 'em back in either one.
It's your call.



As close to the ballpark as
you can get without a ticket.
Lifelike animation puts you
there whether you're diving
down the third base line or
caught in a pickle between
second and third.

Take the



Call it a head-first slide.
Call it a take-out slide.
Call it a balls-out-I'm-goin'-
in-no-matter-what-slide.
Just don't call it an "out."



This official seal is your assurance that this product meets the highest quality standards of Sega™. Buy games and accessories with this seal to be sure that they are compatible with the Sega™ Genesis™ system.



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Trade players. Edit teams. And become the first player/manager in recent history.

Whether you're pitchin' overhand
or submarine, you've got the runner
in the corner of your eye. He's on.
He's off. He's out. Picked off.



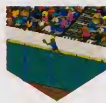
whole field



I got it. No, I got it. I got it. No, I got it.
Wham. You both got it. Out cold. Watch where
you're going or suffer severe player collisions.



If it's in the game, it's in the game.™



Triple Play '96 is the first baseball game ever to deliver excitement beyond an oversized pitcher/batter interface. We took all of baseball. Edited the boring parts. And delivered an action-packed game that can only be described as "playing one continuous highlight reel." Go nuts.



Microsoft: Bill Gates comes out to play with Windows 95/p.14 • **Lockheed and Martin Marietta:** US giant takes stake in the PC's future/p.16 • **Virtual Boy:** Nintendo marks August 14 as launch day/p.18 • **Arcadia:** How to handle violence and the new game crooks/p.20 • **Joyriding:** Learn how to hook up online for multiplayer NASCAR tournaments/p.21



International news from the forefront of the gaming industry

Microsoft comes out to play

Windows 95 — the one-step answer to DOS that can unlock the PC's gaming potential

Despite the numerous delays that have plagued the release of Microsoft's Windows 95 (now officially slated for late August), the most recent test release of Bill Gates' new operating system looks as if it's rapidly nearing completion and might meet its release date.

Designed as a complete replacement for both MS-DOS and Windows 3.1 (it won't require either to run), Windows 95 is a true 32-bit operating system that enables power-users and novices alike to take full advantage of current PC technology and next generation advances like 2D and 3D acceleration, and 3D sound from the comforts of a user-friendly interface that is distinctly Mac-like. So Mac-like, in fact, that at Apple HQ in Cupertino, CA, employees are sporting "Windows 95/Mac 89" T-shirts.

While the majority of the updates found in Windows 95 have been geared to the suit-and-tie set (improved multitasking, networking, etc.), gamers — who've been frustrated by DOS and tainted by the lackluster games available for 3.1 — will find that the real promise of this new and improved Windows system is how it has evolved from a spreadsheet manager and word-processor to a powerful new gaming platform.

Throughout its development, Microsoft has consulted with major game developers and hardware manufacturers to target the weak points that made DOS and Windows 3.1 such troublesome gaming

environments, and made sure that the transition of games and peripherals to Windows 95 would be a smooth one.

One of the first steps taken in achieving that goal was to ensure that the entire legacy of MS-DOS games, and those still in development (even games that use DOS extenders), would be able to run under Windows 95 with little or no performance loss and require none of the alterations to system files that typify such games.

For the most part, MS-DOS based games will simply run in an automatically optimized DOS environment when launched, gaining access all the available system resources as needed. And if the game fails to run under Windows 95's DOS environment, the user can create a custom environment specifically for that game or exit the system and use a pure MS-DOS mode.

And under Windows 95, there's more memory available in this new DOS than you might expect. By substituting the real-mode device drivers for CD-ROM drives, disk caches, mice, and memory managers with Windows 95 32-bit virtual device drivers (which take up no conventional memory) users can expect as 80 k conventional memory free.

Then there's the plug-and-play hardware detection which makes installing and configuring new hardware a breeze. Simply install a new device, reboot your computer, and Windows 95 automatically detects the device and installs the appropriate software. After testing this feature

Microsoft's Online Connection

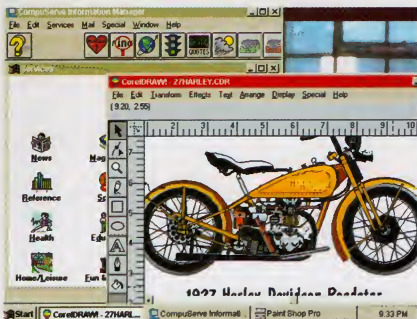
One component of Windows 95 stirring up controversy even before the product ships is The Microsoft Network, an online service providing discussion groups, downloadable software, and Internet access, much like CompuServe and America On-Line, currently the leading online services.

MSN differs in that the front-end software necessary to connect to the service is built into Windows 95 itself, in effect making every Windows 95 user a potential customer.

Some online services, particularly AOL, insist that because Microsoft already enjoys a near monopoly on computer operating systems, the inclusion of MSN with Windows 95 gives the new service an unfair advantage. The Department of Justice is investigating these claims as we go to press.



Resolving hardware conflicts is now made easy, just access the system properties from the control panel and see where the conflict lies (top). Fine-tuning a MS-DOS based game can still require some knowledge of DOS, but in most cases you can let Windows 95 make the decisions for you (above)



Add New Hardware Wizard



Click the manufacturer and model of your hardware. If your hardware is not listed, or if you have an installation disk, click Have Disk.

If your hardware is still not listed, click Back, and then select a different hardware type. To see all hardware choices, click Unknown Hardware.

Manufacturers:

Ad Lib
Aztech Labs
Compaq
Creative Labs
DSP Group
ESS Technology, Inc.
Tadpole

Models:

Creative Advanced Wave Effects Synthesis for AWE
Creative Labs Sound Blaster
Creative Labs Sound Blaster 16 or AWE-32
Creative Labs Sound Blaster 16 Plug and Play
Creative Labs Sound Blaster Pro

Windows 95's improved multitasking abilities mean downloads don't have to be downtime (top). Adding new hardware is as simple as popping it in the machine and letting Windows 95 auto-detect (above)

with a myriad of devices, we've yet to be disappointed. Even installing software becomes a no-brainer with auto-spin, a manufacturer-supported feature that reduces the installation of a game to simply inserting a CD-ROM or diskette into a drive. And though it's one of the least heralded features of Windows 95, joystick support finally gets its due with a calibration routine that actually works.

One of Windows

95's biggest potential problems is that game developers will perennially cut whatever corners they can to glean any extra speed out of a machine — and if that means sacrificing ease of use, or bypassing the Windows 95 operating system, then so be it. Isn't Windows 95 destined to be cut out of the equation as, once again, programmers get closer to the metal?

"It's just a 'Who's code is better than who's' thing," believes David Britton, group marketing manager for Microsoft's Personal Systems Division.



Can games truly remain on the cutting edge while conforming to the standards of an operating system such as Windows 95? Microsoft says so, but the jury is still out

"But you should see the developers who are working on [Windows 95]. If you start even thinking about suggesting that their stuff is not fast or has anything to do with multimedia, you're looking at getting yourself injured," points out Britton. And how will this ensure 95's acceptance by gamers? "These guys are completely and entirely focused on performance. Hopefully, the game developers will see that. I'm sure they'll be some toggling around, and asking 'Does it make sense to support it or not?' but we've built these things with the best people, and we've made them real fast, so I think we'll get substantially good support from them."

So how many units of Windows 95 does Microsoft intend to sell this year? "Conservative numbers are one digit millions," says Britton. "And a relatively aggressive estimate are two digit millions of Windows 95 installed in the US by Christmas."

And what is Windows 95's greatest obstacle? "Frankly, I believe our biggest competitor is inertia — it's essentially the people who're just sitting on MS-DOS and not moving over to the new one."

While the future

of this operating system looks bright, Windows 95 should really begin to show its full potential sometime next year as developers begin using Microsoft's new suite of development tools to create a wave of true 32-bit games specifically for Windows 95. Unlike the limits imposed by the tools found in the 3.1 Win G library, the Windows 95 Win G library features a host of new utilities which make the most of 95's multithreading capabilities therefore enabling designers nearly unlimited variety and flexibility in their designs.

1995 should be an interesting year, indeed.



Who is it?

30 years ago this man invented a computer control device that has still not been bettered. He was also the first to use e-mail on what is now the Internet, and developed the theory behind Hypertext

Designed as a complete replacement for both MS-DOS and Windows 3.1, Windows 95 is a true 32-bit operating system enabling power-users and novices alike to take full advantage of current PC technology

breaking

US giant takes stake in PC's future

Lockheed enters graphics battle with its \$180 Real3D processor

it is...

Doug Engelbart, the inventor of the mouse. His preferred design was a knee-driven pointing device, but it proved too tiring to use. He also developed a more efficient alternative to the QWERTY keyboard, but it never caught on.

LOCKHEED MARTINET

In March this year, Lockheed and Martin Marietta announced a "merger of equals" on a "complete pooling of interests" basis.

The new company, Lockheed Marietta Corporation, has four key areas of interest: space and strategic missiles; electronics; aeronautics; and information technology services. It also has energy and materials subsidiaries.

Together, the two companies can boast annual sales of about \$23 billion and employ more than 170,000 people, making LMC a major player in the global electronics industry.



The Lockheed Martin Corporation, formed in March following the merger of aviation manufacturer Lockheed and military technology specialist Martin Marietta, has announced a PC-based 3D graphics accelerator which it claims can move more polygons per second than any mainstream system currently available. The accelerator, named Real3D, is said to be able to move 750,000 textured, shaded, depth-buffered, and MIP-mapped polygons per second, more than Sega's Model 2 arcade board, currently the most powerful board in the arcades.

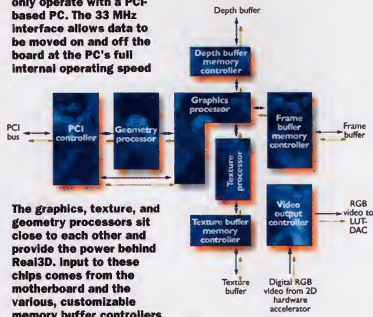
The Real3D technology is primarily a result of Martin Marietta's longstanding relationship with the defense industry. The firm was involved in NASA research during the '50s and '60s, and in the '70s and '80s went on to work for the US Defense Department on a variety of graphically intensive projects. The technology's basics were then applied to other fields; they helped to make Sega's Model 2 arcade board, with Martin Marietta supplying its texture-mapping chips and TARGET database generation system.

LMC has invested more than \$200 million in computer graphics research and now owns more than 40 patents in the field, including the "unique anti-aliasing architecture" used in Real3D. The logic behind this move was explained by Carlton Caldwell, manager of marketing communications at LMC: "As defense spending has been cut down, we took our technology into the arcades. Our next step is to move into single-board PC systems. If you look at our history, this is a natural downward progression."

The first, and most basic, Real3D model will be the R3D/100, which is intended to form part of a scalable hardware family — LMC has already announced the R3D/1000, targeted at high-end users. To ensure the system's continued growth, Real3D employs the versatile API OpenGL as its basic command library. Developed by Silicon

Real3D/100 chipset

The R3D/100 and 1000 only operate with a PCI-based PC. The 33 MHz interface allows data to be moved on and off the board at the PC's full internal operating speed.



The graphics, texture, and geometry processors sit close to each other and provide the power behind Real3D. Input to these chips comes from the motherboard and the various, customizable memory buffer controllers.

Real3D tech specs

Graphics processor: True-polygon processor featuring a 32-bit RGBA Gouraud-shaded color path, 24-bit coordination throughput, alpha and stencil testing up to 8-bits, exponential fog, illumination and directed light source, scissor testing, stipple masking and line patterning.

Geometry processor: Enhanced 32-bit floating-point processor. Vertex transformations and clipping (position, depth, color, and texture).

Texture processor: True-perspective corrected texture. 0.5-8.0MB memory with up to 192 128x128 MIP-mapped texture maps. 66 MHz memory access. 32x32 to 512x512 square or rectangular map sizes. 32-bit RGBA texture filter path, texture magnification and minification filtering, clamping and repeating. Six different map formats.

Depth buffer memory controller: 0.5 MB memory, 40-bit datapath, 132 MHz memory access @ 520 MB per second.

Frame buffer memory controller: 0.5-10 MB MDRAM, 132 MHz memory access @ 400MB/second, 24-bit (true) color, 320x200 to 1280x1024 video resolution, single or double buffered, block read and write modes.

Device driver kits: OpenGL and 3D-DDI compliant development kits available.

Physical characteristics: 208-pin QFP and 304-pin QFP, 3.3V, 4 Watt aggregate @ 3.3V and 33 MHz.

Essential reading

Playing MUDs on the Internet



Rawn Shaw and James Romine
Publisher: Wiley and Sons
Release Date: Available now
Pages: 328

There is nothing light, easy-going, or cute about *Playing MUDs on the Internet*, which is an essential, role-playing bible for hard-core, Internet-oriented, orc-bashing hounds.

This book is for the blood-thirsty. It requires a long attention span, as do RPGs, and may not be entirely for

beginners. Rawn Shaw and James Romine, the authors, spent hundreds of hours playing MUDs and their experience has been conveyed cleanly, thoroughly, and with the most deadpan seriousness it's almost scary. Chapters are based on DikuMUDs, from Denmark, LPMUDs, from Sweden, and one on Social MUDs.

This book lists places to play, how to understand your new, virtual, (most often) text-based world, what to do, what NOT to do, (like don't steal a kill!), explains commands, attributes, and other RPG culturalisms. Chapters 4 and 9 (on combat), and the killer five-part appendix, providing ready-to-use ftps, clients, servers and sources, travel guides, as well as the all-encompassing MUDlist (including Doran's), may be worth the price of the book itself.

Computer Gamer's Survival Guide



Cy Tymony
Publisher: Prima Publishing
Release Date: Available now
Pages: 308

The recent sprawl of computer "help" guides flooding the market has made everyone crazy, just crazy. Forget the guides, you say, to hell with the manual, let's just have at the games! That's fine, but when you load the game and your drive immediately fails, you're stuck, pal.

The *Computer Gamer's Survival Guide* is to gamers what the Utility Belt is to Batman. This book has just about everything: how to load your game into Windows, which version to use — Version 3.11, not 3.1 — where and what to download from the Internet (like T7G130.EXE, a patch for *The 7th Guest*), working with your Memory, running MemMaker, and why videogames load differently from other software programs.

All in all, it's packed with useful advice, and while some of the hints are timeless, some may be defunct by the printing of this article. But it's a good book; and it's just a load off our minds they didn't call it "How to Install Games for Dummies."



Realtime images of this quality have long been available in military simulators. Now LMC is attempting to introduce it to the home PC

Graphics and used by Microsoft, this is the nearest thing there is to a standard in the PC development community.

At the heart of the R3D100 are its geometry and graphics processors. The geometry processor is a 32-bit chip that deals with tasks like vertex transformations and position, depth, color, and texture clipping assigned by the host CPU.

The graphics processor, also a 32-bit chip, features the standard 8-bit RGB channels, plus an alpha effects channel. Primitives are accepted from either the geometry processor or through the PCI bus from the CPU. All coordinates and textures are 24-bit (the Sony PlayStation only uses 16-bit), and Gouraud shading, anti-aliasing, depth-buffering, fog and directional light sourcing are all built into the hardware.

The texture processor is another of Real3D's strengths, with a huge variety of options and upgrades available. Up to 8MB of textures can be stored on board (although 0.5MB is the base figure), and these bitmaps can be MIP-mapped, reshaped, and have alpha effects applied in realtime. Perspective texture mapping — a powerful and realistic technique that has so far only been implemented in software such as BRender — is also available.

LMC is aiming to persuade PC manufacturers to bundle Real3D with new machines. This is also the approach taken by 3DLabs, developer of the GLINT chip, although the UK firm is working with Creative Labs to produce a PC game board rather than a pure graphics accelerator.

Caldwell expects the first games to be available by the first quarter, 1996; however, while LMC's expertise in 3D graphics is unquestioned, its success in the cut-throat PC graphics market is by no means assured.



LMC claims that images such as this can be generated in realtime for less than \$200. Note the true-color and true-shaded environment

breaking

Virtual Boy: Nintendo names the day

August 14 — mark the date in red for Nintendo's latest system launch

Howard Lincoln on Virtual Boy

"I think there are limitations and advantages in any videogame product, and I'm sure all the disadvantages you've explained can be quickly turned into advantages, particularly by our marketing people.

"My recollection is that there were similar questions about Game Boy when we launched it. Yes, the color is monochromatic, but it does produce the 3D experience. Yes, you have to look through it as opposed to playing it on a TV set and all that, but ultimately the product is judged by our shareholders in terms of whether it sells and whether we make a good profit."

While Nintendo of America readies to release Virtual Boy — the 32-bit "VR" machine, which uses reflective LED technology to generate its 3D display — on August 14, the system has been on sale in Japan since July 14 (though its Japanese launch was pushed back due to software delays).

Virtual Boy retails at ¥15,000 (\$165) in Japan, down from a planned ¥19,800 (\$220) — a reduction effected by NCL in order to reach a wider userbase, and in the US the Virtual Boy will sell for \$179.95, bundled with Mario's *Dream Tennis*.

Nintendo has confirmed that 11 titles will be available at launch (retailing at an MSRP of \$39.95) with a further 20 titles made available by the end of the year. The company is standing by its prediction of retail sales of three million units in the first year worldwide.

Playable games confirmed by Nintendo are *Teleroboxer*, a robotic boxing title similar in style to the *Punch Out!* series; *Galactic Pinball*, which features five different pinball tables; *Mario Clash*, a platformer retaining many familiar "Mario" elements but with the opportunity to move "in" and "out" of the screen (it's

perhaps the most promising title, having been designed in part by Shigeru Miyamoto); and *Red Alarm*, a wire-frame polygon shooter developed by T&E Soft, boasting "gameplay similar to *Starfox*."

Four other projects are in progress, but are further from release. Two are from Nintendo, *Mario Bros VB* and a *Pole Position*-style racer, and two from Hudson Soft, a vertically scrolling shooter and a puzzle game in the style of *Tetris/Puyo-Puyo*.

Third party licensees working on the system include such major names as Namco, Virgin, and Takara. Konami, Capcom, and Square Soft — three of Nintendo's most valuable third party allies in recent years — are playing

it safe, having yet to decide on the system's full potential.

There has been concern in both Japan and the US over the marketing strategy for the machine (is Nintendo's latest venture really a next generation console or merely a high-tech toy?) but it has now gained retail support, with many of leading toy stores and software chains agreeing to push it.

Expect the first reviews of Virtual Boy's newest software in the finals section, next month in **NEXT Generation** on sale August 22.

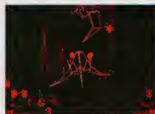
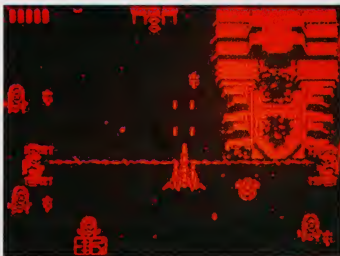


Nintendo's Satellaview system (see NG 5) went live in Japan on April 24.

The hardware, which costs ¥18,000 (\$198) and plugs into a Super Famicom, enables users to access satellite broadcasts and download SFC software.

Faced with a front-end in the style of a cartoony Japanese city (above), the user can wander freely between buildings, which represent various services.

As well as original software and previews of forthcoming games, it is claimed that Satellaview will soon offer the facility to expand normal cartridge games with extra data. How the system will coordinate such a feat, however, is not yet known.



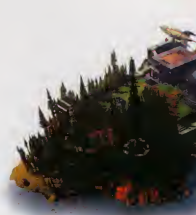
Hudson Soft's as yet untitled shooter (left) enables flying from "behind" the scenery; T&E Soft's SNES-based, Starfox-inspired *Red Alarm* (middle); and the obligatory puzzle game (no name yet), also from Hudson (above right)

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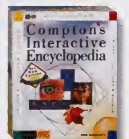
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breaking

Arcadia

Inside news analysis from the world of coin-ops



Marcus Webb is the editor-in-chief of *RePlay* magazine, the US' leading trade amusement magazine

by Marcus Webb

On the trail of the Game Crooks

Have you ever visited a combination arcade and rental videogame store? A few such hybrids do exist here and there in the US. Some of these places even let you rent a cartridge and play it on the spot, using a hardware platform owned by the store (rent-and-play). This is apparently legal, although some videogame manufacturers discourage it. However, it would be blatantly illegal if anyone were to place a Sega Saturn inside a coin-op cabinet and hook it up to a coin slot like an arcade game (pay-for-play).

What's the difference between rent-and-play and pay-for-play? Technically, the latter constitutes "public performance" of a copyrighted or a trademarked work of art... and the rights of someone who owns the software do not extend this far. It's the same legal principal at work in those notices at the beginning of a VCR movie tape saying "licensed only for private viewing." That is, you can't rent a tape of *Blade Runner*, and sell tickets for showing at home, either.

Years ago, one or two unscrupulous businessmen rigged up home systems to play like arcade games, taking coins in a slot. This happened once or twice with the original Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), we understand. In 1995, at least one home-to-arcade conversion system has been advertised for exactly the same illegal purpose. To our knowledge, though, nobody's tried this stunt in the US for a long time.

Not so overseas, however.

Videogame industry investigators say in Latin America, the illegal conversion of consumer games to coin-op arcade use is widespread. And, our guess is that this type of crime could become more common in the US as Sega Saturn, Sony PlayStation, and other advanced game platforms penetrate the market. If you spot any home games inside an arcade cabinet which is set up for coin-op play, give a call to Dick Trindle, director of investigations, American Amusement Machine Association, at (708) 290-9088.



Scores of titles at E³ could have succeeded as coin-ops, but you'll never see them in your local arcade



Around the US, violent games are prompting local cops — even some state house politicians — to seek bans on some titles

Electronic Arts Exits Coin-op

One example of this "we're out of the arcades but aren't quite saying so" is Electronic Arts. It's an exciting and innovative company, so it's a shame to see the company close its coin-op division (at least for now). The official line is "We're evaluating our position." Theoretically, it could return to the arcade market in a few years, but company spokesmen said "we're focusing our efforts on the consumer market for now." Actually, EA hardly made it into the arcades in the first place. The company first announced it would start producing coin-op games back in 1993. At the time, many industry professions hoped EA's technological leadership and dynamic marketing would lend new zest to America's arcades. Alas, it was not to be. EA licensed one coin-op game called *Battletoads* which was a so-so performer. The company also wrestled with the idea of adapting its successful title *John Madden Football* to arcade use, but executed the idea. According to reliable sources, up to 40 engineers were laboring in EA's now-defunct coin-op division.

The Videogame Violence Issue — on the way back again?

E³ sparked plenty of press coverage by the mainstream media. Much of it, like a report on CBS' morning news show, was basically positive, explaining the new systems and admiring the super graphics. But some reports — such as one in the *LA Times* — pointed out how new technology has not liberated video from a dependence on violent themes, as some manufacturers had originally hoped. In fact, a local LA TV news station showed clips from the usual culprits (*Mortal Kombat*, etc.), then interviewed a child psychologist who claimed: "We are teaching our children to be murderers." (Sure, and 30 years ago, when the same shrink played cowboys and Indians, he was learning United Nations diplomacy.)

Last year, the home game industry responded to pressure ("Do something about violence") by creating an independent group called the Entertainment Software Ratings Board, which labels games according to content. Still, this hasn't solved the violence dilemma for arcades. In Florida, the legislature considered a law this past spring to make it illegal to sell or play "excessive violent" games (whatever that means). Similar laws may be passed in Michigan and California.

Even without such harsh laws on the books, a recent incident in Southern California illustrates the scope of the problem. A local police force in the city of Westminster advised the city council that a possible new arcade should not operate "any potential game that glorifies violence to specific individuals or race groups... We believe these games encourage violence" and we don't want any new arcade to become a gang hangout, detectives said. Three specific titles were named by the cops, including a game with a law enforcement theme! (No prizes for guessing what that one might be).

To head off these problems, manufacturers of arcade videogames have generally agreed to post voluntary "content descriptions" on their games. But at prestime, only a handful of manufacturers were actually programming such notices into attract modes. If more factories don't get with the program, local arcade owners may start posting self-made "content disclosure" stickers on certain videogames — and hope this helps ease the situation.

JOYRIDING

Multiplayer driving with NASCAR Racing



Bernard Yee has contributed to *USA Today*, writes regularly for *PC Gamer* and *PC Magazine*, and has authored several books on gaming

by Bernard Yee

Content. That's what determines a really good game, whether you're playing it alone, through a modem, over a network, or on an online service. There have been good multiplayer games for sure, like Kesmai's *SVGA Air Warrior* and the company's upcoming *SVGA Multiplayer*, *BattleTech*, but the best games and graphics have come out by companies like Origin, Looking Glass, LucasArts — companies not known for their online game support. Still, things are changing, and the latest entrants into multiplayer online games are not Hollywood, cable companies, online services, or even multiplayer games developers like Simutronics or Kesmai.

But INN's graphics are a bit dated today. More recently, Microprose's *Magic: The Gathering* will have stand alone and multiplayer play, most likely through the GEnie online service, and CivNet will permit the numbingly addictive game *Civilization* to be played among friends on a Local area network. But Papyrus Design Group, creator of *NASCAR Racing* and the upcoming *IndyCar Racing 2.0*, have another idea. Papyrus is about to unveil its own online gaming service, Code named "Hawaii," until the lawyers can clear a real name, this online service will allow *NASCAR* virtual racers to compete together, with as many as 32 human drivers per race.

NASCAR Racing, as a game, has earned a great deal of critical acclaim, from the attention to racing detail to the stunning SVGA graphics on the CD-ROM version. *NASCAR Racing* essentially simulates stock car racing on nine Winston Cup race tracks with seven more tracks released on the *NASCAR Track Pack*. With realistic car designs, graphics, sponsors, and most importantly, driving dynamics, *NASCAR* has won awards for its game design. And if you thought *NASCAR* was fun against the computer, competing against other human drivers is bound to be as

big a rush as racing down the tarmac at 180 mph. Hawaii will have local access numbers as well as 1-800 access (with a surcharge, of course), and will require at least a 9,600 bps modem. Current *NASCAR* owners will be able to download a signup kit that will permit them to try out the service without buying a full software package — but they'll probably want to buy one, since Papyrus products will be multiplayer ready when shipped — if appropriate, according to Ann-Marie Gianantoni, a Papyrus representative. And Papyrus is looking to partner with other game developers to support this new gaming service as well.

Why did Papyrus create its own service, as opposed to using an established online network? According to Gianantoni, commercial services have high latency problems — it takes a while for the data to get from your phone, through SprintNet or your dial-up service, through nodes and to the main computer. Hawaii will have low latency transfer rates, critical for a high speed simulation like *NASCAR* with a direct connect into the system. Papyrus, of course, isn't alone in supporting multiplayer games. But it may be unique in the style and commitment behind multiplayer games. Hawaii is already in testing today; look for a rollout sometime this fall. The first version will support e-mail and chat rooms as well, and major enhancements are already planned. Although a set price hasn't been announced, is it that important? What's a few dollars when you can spend a few hours on the virtual track? You'll surely be saving money, since online *NASCAR Racing* won't raise your life insurance premiums.

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Racing purists can touch up their choice of *NASCAR* racer to reach the maximum in performance with the many pregame options

Several game companies known for their stand-alone products are looking toward online services. Sierra began this trend with its own network, the Sierra Network, which then became the Imagination Network (now owned by AT&T). One of the major attractions of INN was — and still is — Dynamix's classic World War I air combat simulation, *Red Baron* — and the ability to dogfight with other human beings. Later on, *Shadows of Yserbius* was added as the company's multiplayer offering, and more mundane games, like checkers (and cybersex), were added,



Realistic speed (up to 180 mph) and multicar pileups are achievable online using a 9,600 bps baud modem in *NASCAR Racing*



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How would the entire game vat of prim

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Yu Suzuki
CHIEF MANAGER,
RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT OF
AMUSEMENT DEPARTMENT,
SEGA ENTERPRISES

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Sega

Saturn:

You've

watched

the TV

commercials...



Now read the facts

Walk into any Toys R Us, Electronic Boutique, Software Etc., or Babbages today, and you can buy an official, matte-black US Sega Saturn (complete with Virtua Fighter) for "between \$399 and \$449." Up until May 11, Sega of America had told the world that Saturn wouldn't be available on US shores until September 2, or "Saturday," as Sega was keen to have the date dubbed.

So why the surprise early launch? Is Sega scared? Is Sega over-confident? And just how good is Saturn anyway? The **NEXT Generation** office has been swamped with these questions and more from perplexed gamers keen to cut through the hype of Sega's \$50 million advertising campaign and get to the facts. So here it is — the answers to the 18 most frequently asked questions.

Q. So what (and why) is Sega Saturn?

Let's start at the very beginning. Sega Saturn (or simply "Saturn" as it's known in Japan) is Sega's new, 32-bit games console. Typically, the lifespan of a successful game machine (be it home computer or dedicated console) ranges from four to seven years. No matter how complete a machine's domination of a market is, the continuous advancement of technology gradually renders all computer-based products out-dated and under-powered.

Sooner or later it becomes necessary to wipe the slate clean and start from scratch. As the 16-bit SNES and Genesis are now both approaching five years old, that time is now. Of course, a time of transition is also a time of instability in the market. A time when newcomers (3DO, Atari, and Sony) can steal market share from the established leaders (Sega and Nintendo) with alternative game machines of their own. The race is on to produce a game machine that will secure the highly profitable position of "new mass market standard." Hence the plethora of game machines currently scrapping it out for your gaming dollars, with Sony's PlayStation due for launch in September and Nintendo's Ultra 64 slated for an April 1996 release. And hence the arrival of Sega's proposed heir to the thrown of the mighty Genesis, the Sega Saturn.

A total of 500,000 Saturns were sold in the first month in Japan; and since its launch date on November 22, 1995, more than 1 million Saturns have been sold to date. Sega of America predicts that 600,000 Sega Saturns will sell in the US in 1995.

Q. What do I get for my \$399?

Sega Saturn comes complete with *Virtua Fighter*, a demonstration CD profiling 20 upcoming Saturn releases, one joystick, a power supply, and all the cables necessary to connect the Sega Saturn to a TV set.



Sega Saturn: tech specs

Processors:

- 2 Hitachi SH2 32-bit RISC @ 28.6 MHz, 25 MIPS (CPU) (2 cm square)
- 1 Hitachi SH1 32-bit RISC (CD-ROM controller)
- VDP1 32-bit video display processor
- VDP2 32-bit video display processor
- Saturn Control Unit (including DSP high math chip and DMA memory handler)
- Motorola 68EC000 sound processor
- Yamaha FH1 DSP sound processor

Memory:

- 2 MB (16-Mbit) RAM
- 1.54 MB (12-Mbit) VRAM
- 540K (4-Mbit) Audio RAM
- 540K (4-Mbit) CD-ROM Cache
- 512K Boot ROM

Video

VDP1

- sprite, polygon, and geometry engine
- dual 256 KB frame buffers for rotation and scaling effects
- texture mapping
- Gouraud shading
- 512K cache for textures

VDP2

- background and scroll plane
- 5 simultaneous scrolling backgrounds
- 2 simultaneous rotating playfields

Audio:

- Yamaha FH1 24-bit DSP (overall ensemble @ 22.6 MHz)
- Motorola 16-bit 68EC000 sound processor @ 11.3 MHz
- 32 PCM (Pulse Code Modulation) Channels
- 8 FM (Frequency Modulation) Channels
- 44.1 KHz sampling rate

Data Storage:

- 2x CD-ROM drive (320 KB/sec transfer speed)
- Audio CD compatible
- CD+G compatible
- CD+EG compatible
- CD Single (8 cm) compatible
- Optional: Video CD, Photo CD, eBook, Digital Karaoke
- Optional: 512KB memory cartridges for game save

Input/Output:

- serial communications port
- internal 32-bit expansion port
- internal multi AV port for video CD (MPEG) adapter
- composite video/stereo (standard)
- NTSC RF (optional)
- RGB compatible (optional)
- HDTV compatible
- Analog control pad (x2)



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**Q. What could I buy instead?**

Your "next generation" gaming alternatives currently include both Panasonic and Goldstar 3DO players (for around \$350), the Atari

Jaguar (SRP \$149) available with CD-ROM player add-on (for \$159), a Sega 32X add-on for your Genesis (don't even think about it), or an unofficially imported PlayStation (for approximately \$600).

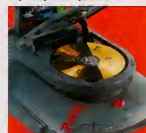
Right now, of all these machines, Sega Saturn delivers the most

gaming bang for the buck. Atari Jaguar is priced right, but its long-term future is questionable. The 32X is underpowered, and has yet to see any killer software to justify its existence. Both 3DO machines can boast a library of great games, but the machine's tech specs simply don't match those of its 32-bit competitors, and at an equal price point with Sega Saturn — for a pure game player looking



to the long term, at least — it has to be regarded as a secondary purchase.

Come September 9, however, a new contender will join the ranks as Sony's PlayStation makes its official debut for just \$299. And then come April 1996, Nintendo's delayed Ultra 64 will join the party for "below \$250."



Now add to the confusion 3DO's M2 accelerator (for use as both a stand-alone unit and as an accelerator for existing 3DO machines) slated for a "late 1995" release, and the question of picking an obvious "best buy" becomes even trickier.

**Q. Does it really matter which machine I buy?**

Not as obvious as it first appears, although the answer is still a resolute "yes." When buying a gaming system, it's important not only to base your purchasing decision on its price and whether you like the games or not, but on the system's chances of thriving in the long term. What may seem like a bargain today quickly loses its appeal when, six months down the line, its lack of mass-market support leads to no more games being produced for it. It's a gamble that anyone eager to embrace a new technology takes — remember the VHS versus Betamax VCR-format wars? Or more recently, CD versus DAT versus MiniDisc? With hindsight, its easy to see which format is the best pick, but the millions of dollars spent on ill-fated technologies each year is testament to the fact that making the right decision never gets any easier.

Q. Is the price of the Sega Saturn likely to drop in the near future (as in before the 1995 winter holiday season)?

Typically, the price of gaming systems drops to approximately half their original price during the course of their lifetimes. This long-term price drop is a factor of both decreased manufacturing costs (second generation redesigns, technical innovations, and economies of scale all play their part), and the increased profits from software sales as a system "takes off," which enables a lower profit-margin on hardware sales.

In the short term, however, it's the strategic battle with a system's rivals that is the biggest influence on retail price. The price of \$399 is merely Sega Saturn's opening gambit. Safe in the knowledge that PlayStation and Ultra 64 remain unavailable to gamers, Sega can effectively charge what it likes to the diehard game fans and early adopters for Saturn. Come the \$299 launch of PlayStation in September, however, it's expected that the Sega Saturn will drop in price to \$349 to match the fresh competition (the PlayStation will come with no game included, whereas it's anticipated that Sega will continue to bundle *Virtua Fighter* — or an alternative title — with Saturn).

It is estimated that it costs Sega roughly \$380 to manufacture each Sega Saturn — the parts it uses are expensive, and unlikely to significantly drop in cost in the near future. While this may appear to leave it vulnerable to price undercutting by Sony (who's PlayStation is estimated to cost Sony \$300 per unit), Sega does have a library of home-produced games, ready for inclusion "free" with the Saturn hardware — increasing the machine's perceived value. This weapon, and the fact that both companies have expressed their readiness to take a loss (up to \$100, in Sony's case) on hardware sales, with a view to making up the profits with future software sales, will ensure that the pricing of PlayStation and Sega Saturn will remain volatile and subject to fluctuation.

Expect both companies to respond to Nintendo successfully launching Ultra 64 at its "below \$250" price come April 1996.

**Q. So why the surprise launch?**

According to Sega's Tim Dunley, the surprise was "to draw a line in the sand." Which is a polite way of saying to try and screw Sony. PlayStation is perceived by Sega as Saturn's largest threat, and all those who witnessed the cat and mouse games played by the two companies prior to the launch of the two machines in Japan last year (release dates and prices were continually changed, "to see who would blink first," as Sony's Steve Race recounts) were expecting history to repeat itself come the US launch.

Q. So what did Sega gain by doing launching first?

There are several key advantages for Sega to gain a head start over Sony and PlayStation: First, US gamers have been waiting for Saturn and PlayStation for more than a year now, and there is a large pent up demand of people willing to spend \$400 on the first next generation console they can get their hands on — be it Saturn or PlayStation. Unofficially imported Saturns selling for anything up to \$800 is testament to this, but now Sega has this market for itself.

Second, the surprise launch generated lots of hype and interest in the system, and being the only TV ad out there, Sega is getting more bang for its marketing buck than Sony can hope to get come PlayStation's September launch.

Last but not least, any head start has to be an advantage in terms of selling a sufficient number of machines (500,000 seems to be the magic number) required to reach "critical mass" and ensure the continued support of third party game development.

Q. What did Sega lose?

If omelettes can't be made without breaking eggs, then surprise launches can't be executed without pissing a few people off — and developing a few strategic problems.

Many of Sega's third party game developers had been planning to have their titles available at the same time as the machine's launch, and obviously cutting three months from their development time at one day's notice has proved too much to deal with for most. Whether this results in finished games arriving later than hoped, or unfinished games arriving on schedule, is a question for Sega, its third parties, and their morale.

Second, Sega decided to share its secret launch plans with only four retail chains: Toys R Us, Electronic Boutique, Software Etc., and Babbages. The remaining group of the US' retail business has justifiable reason to seek a similar "preferential treatment" deal with Sony and/or Nintendo.

Third, all the press in the United States were completely fooled. Sega did its utmost to convince all the gaming magazines to devote their June issues and covers to coverage of Saturn, while maintaining that Saturn wouldn't be released until September. This made several magazines look very foolish (NEXT Generation not included — we predicted that the "Saturday" announcement may

well be a decoy), and led to considerable confusion in the marketplace and amongst Sega's core audience.

Last, but not least, the CD sampler disk of upcoming Saturn games that Sega included with the Saturn was bugged — obviously a symptom of a rushed production job.

Q. So what about the Genesis, Sega CD, and 32X?

What indeed? Sega Saturn is incompatible with any of Sega's previous platforms — so it's time to start a new software library for game players, and time to redress the product portfolio for Sega. It's no secret that Sega CD continues to flounder, with further game development sidelined in preference to Saturn and even Genesis development. The 32X has also failed to live up to Sega's expectations (although seemingly everyone else predicted its lukewarm reception by the gaming public). So (although Sega won't admit it), it's expected that the majority of Sega's development and marketing effort will be devoted to Saturn, with a hard-core of occasional, blockbuster Genesis titles continuing to be released.

As for 32X and Sega CD, expect only a trickle of games to be released from this point on.

Q. How does this system compare to 3DO, Jaguar, PlayStation, and Ultra 64?

What Saturn's technical specifications boil down to are these: 200,000 texture mapped polygons per second, 24-bit true-color graphics, 16.8 million available colors, 320x224 or 720x576 resolution and a powerful 2D sprite engine.

With multiple processor environments, disparate components, and a lack of any common benchmark in terms of quantifying the size/complexity of polygons in polygons per second generation, comparing systems by numbers alone invariably results in comparing apples to oranges — and inaccurate results.

What is clear is that the new systems can be ranked in order of "overall system power." Sega Saturn falls a little behind Sony PlayStation and considerably behind Ultra 64 on all-round performance, especially in the discipline of creating 3D environments. It does, however, outperform both Atari's Jaguar and the 3DO player. The proof of the pudding, however, is in the eating — and it's the software on which a game system must ultimately be judged.

Q. What would Sega's best friends say about the design of Saturn?

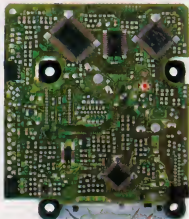
For more information about Sega Saturn (as Sega would like you to hear it), use the following Internet addresses:

- <http://www.segaa.com> (World Wide Web)
- GO SEGA (CompuServe Forum)
- segasaturn@segaa.com (E-Mail)
- <ftp.segaa.com> (ftp site)
- or call 1 (800) SEE SATURN or (800 733-7288) on the good old fashioned telephone.

Sega also published its own White Paper Report to accompany the launch of Sega Saturn, in which it states: "[Sega Saturn is] the only system to use 'Massive Parallel Processing,' which provides immersive, first-person gameplay. Parallel processing, found in super computers, divides tasks into pieces which are then assigned to powerful specialized processors. In contrast, competing game systems assign all computing tasks to a single central processor, like the processing schemes found on small personal computers..." It concludes with this analogy: "Think of the limited musical range of a one man band (the single-processor systems) versus the symphonic possibilities of a fully scored orchestra. There's no comparison."



The Sega Saturn's innards (above) are afflicted, as many developers have complained, by the company's off-the-shelf chip policy. Three separate circuit boards and dozens of chips are required to make the whole intricate kit work. The machine's sound is generated by a set of chips which lie underneath the CD drive mechanism (left)



ng special

Hardly the most bipartisan of analyses, but then Sega's rivals haven't been backward in coming forward to voice their criticism of Saturn's architecture either...

Q. And what about Sega's worst enemies?

"If you take a look at the architecture of Saturn, you can see that they went around with a shopping cart and basically picked and chose components. Then, having seen the Sony product (if we believe what we read) they re-engineered, got back out their shopping cart, and picked up a variety of Hitachi chips that they're now using. And these chips are well down the learning curve, there's millions of them made, they're using them in vacuum cleaners, and rice cookers and all sorts of things. So they're not as susceptible to the learning curve as is our chip set — there's not as much to discover about them."

Steve Race, President & CEO, Sony Computer Entertainment

"Sega is my friend, but I'd still have to say that Saturn is a pooch. It's a mess inside, and no one in the industry is impressed with the technology in the Saturn. Saturn is not at all a leap ahead — it's the same, if not even less, technology than Jaguar."

Sam Tramiel, President & CEO, Atari Corp

"Saturn uses the most powerful processor in the Hitachi family — it's a brand new part, it doesn't have volume customers yet, and because it's not a particularly high performance chip, they had to put two in. This creates a strange architecture that has segmented memory for all the different processors, and the coprocessors are from different companies, and so it's not very well integrated. Developers have raised a lot of complaints about Saturn's design."

Trip Hawkins, President & CEO, The 3DO Company

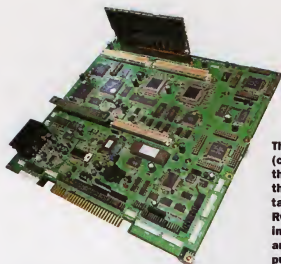
Q. So how easy is it for people to develop games for Saturn?

For the most part, the Saturn's complex design so far has done it few favors. There are seven independent processors, and getting the whole architecture to operate efficiently is not easy. SN Systems' Andy Beveridge, designer of the PSY-Q development system for the Saturn (as well as the PlayStation equivalent), admits: "It's a real coder's machine. For those who love to get their teeth into assembly and really hack into the hardware, the Saturn will probably pack a few surprises. It's going to take some time before we'll see what it can really do."

But even veteran coders have expressed difficulties in getting Saturn to show its true and full power. Sega's own Yu Suzuki, head of AM2 (responsible for the arcade hits *OutRun*, *Virtua*



AM2's Yu Suzuki (left), believes that Sega should follow Sony's approach to attracting third party developers. The SH-2 (above), aka the SuperH RISC engine, is a small, fast RISC chip designed to process graphics, and carries out instructions in far fewer cycles than the more standard CISC-based chips



The ST-V arcade board (codenamed Titan) has the same basic specs as the Sega Saturn but it takes games on plug-in ROM cartridge for increased speed in the arcades (left), its primary purpose. This also makes the ST-V an excellent testing ground for potential Saturn games

Fighter, *Virtua Racing*, *Daytona USA*, and *Sega Rally*, as well as the Saturn conversions of *Virtua Fighter* and *Daytona USA*) displayed somewhat mixed feelings about developing games for Sega's Saturn.

"Trying to program two CPUs has its problems," he explained midway through the development of *Daytona USA*. "Virtua Fighter uses a different CPU for calculating each character. The two CPUs start at the same time but there's a delay when one has to wait for the other to catch up. One very fast central processor would be preferable. I don't think all programmers have the ability to program two CPUs — most can only get about one and a half times the speed that you could get from just one SH-1. I think that only one in 100 programmers would be good enough to get this kind of speed out of Saturn."

The problem that Suzuki refers to is that although both of the SH2 chips run at 28 MHz (whereas in the 32X they run at 23 MHz), and the combined capacity of both chips is 56 MIPS (Millions of Instructions Per Second), they don't run in true parallel. The twin CPUs have a problem accessing main RAM at the same time — one chip has to wait for the other chip (a master/slave configuration) and this slows down performance.

As one of Sega's MVPs (and treated with almost rockstar-like status both outside and within the walls of Sega of Japan), Suzuki-san isn't shackled by a need to tow the corporate line, and is known to speak his mind. Suzuki's opinion that "one very fast central processor would be preferable," certainly jars with Sega's colorful "one-man-band-versus-the-symphonic-possibilities-of-a-fully-scored-orchestra" analogy, but it would seem that the majority of game developers would agree with him. And if Sega's own programmers can't get the machine to perform, well, what chance then has the average third party developer?

Anxious about the lack of confidence in its system, Sega set about rebuilding the Saturn's credibility. At the Sega DevCon in the US earlier this year, it showed off its Sega Graphics Library (which in Japan was touted as a new operating system or OS), developed by R&D division AM2 to make better use of the machine's 3D graphics. The potential of the new graphics libraries was authenticated by a rolling *Virtua Fighter 2* animation that has since been heavily publicized in Japan as a teaser for the Saturn game expected later in the year (more next month).

Certainly, history and logic would suggest that more complicated system architectures are invariably troublesome to initially get to grips with, but do tend to hold more potential for revealing secret strengths as developers progress down its learning curve. It is fair to say that while Sony's PlayStation or Nintendo's

Sega Saturn Official US Release Schedule

Ultra 64 may have given up all their secrets to a programmer after only, say, six months of experimentation, the Sega Saturn could still be an unknown quantity years into the future. Is Sega Saturn's internal complexity a good thing or a bad thing? Only time will tell.

Q. How many or will all of Sega's arcade games appear on the Saturn?

Obviously, Sega's coin-op division is one of the trump cards it holds in battling Sega and Nintendo. A steady stream of hit coin-op titles trickling down from the arcade to the home platforms has proved to be immeasurably valuable to Sega in the past and will continue to be so in the future. Without *Daytona USA* and *Virtua Fighter*, Sega's launch lineup of software would lack the "killer app" necessary to promote its status to that of essential purchase level. Certainly in Japan, where *Virtua Fighter* sold at a 98% ratio with hardware, it's hard to see how Saturn could have prospered so well without it.

Its arcade heritage also gives Sega's in-house development team a healthy sense of pedigree and an unrivaled knowledge — gleaned from years surviving in the cut-throat, hit-or-miss arcade business — of just what makes games tick.

To ensure the continued flow of arcade games to Sega Saturn, Sega has introduced the ST-V ("Titan") arcade board. The ST-V board has provided Sega with a dual purpose coin-op platform. First, it is intended as a low-cost arcade system, in direct contrast to expensive dedicated units like the Model-2 powered *Virtua Fighter 2* or the (even more expensive) Model 3 board. It offers acceptable 3D performance but is primarily a powerful 2D engine, most suited to handling the latest fighting games and sprite-based action games.

Sega hopes that the low price will encourage its widespread use throughout the arcade industry as a multipurpose arcade system. But ST-V is also a testing ground for future Saturn titles. The system is based on the Saturn chipset, with the main technical differences being the use of silicon instead of CD-ROM as a storage medium (he relationship between the two is similar to that between the Neo-Geo CD and the Neo-Geo cartridge system) and the capacity for easily-upgradeable graphics performance.

Sega currently has 10 games in the pipeline for ST-V, including AM2's *Golden Axe: The Duel*, but once again Yu Suzuki may speak for gamers in general when he finds it difficult to become excited about the platform. "I think it will be difficult to create good software for ST-V," he expounds. "It's not that I think the hardware is bad, but personally, I've got more interest in high-end machines. The main problem is that we don't really think about the home version when we're developing arcade games. It's very important to make full use of the power of high-end arcade machines but, because of its low price, the ST-V will become Sega's new flagship hardware for the coin-op market."

Flagship or not, the ST-V is emerging as the Hyundai of the coin-op market — affordable and yet unremarkable. It would seem that to keep gamers satisfied, Sega is still going to have to perform its high-profile arcade conversions the hard way — from the \$30,000 state-of-the-art dedicated coin-op boards to \$399 Saturn with no mutual compatibility to ease the transition.



Alien Trilogy	Acclaim	February '96
Alone in the Dark	Interplay	December
Astal	Sega	July
Basketball '95	Crystal Dynamics	TBA
Big Hurt Baseball	Acclaim	January '96
BlackFire	Sega	August
Brain Dead 1.3	ReadySoft	September
Bug	Sega	June
Caesar's World of Gambling	Interplay	TBA
Canyon Racer	Atlus	TBA
Casper: The Friendly Ghost	Interplay	TBA
Castlemania	Konami	TBA
Center Ring Boxing	JVC	January '96
Congo: The Movie	Sega	December
Creature Shock	Data East	TBA
Crime Wave	Domark	December
Cyber Speedway	Sega	September
Cyberia	Interplay	November
Cyberseed	Namco	October
Dark Legend	Data East	TBA
Dark Stalkers	Capcom	TBA
Dark Sun	Data East	TBA
Deadly Skies	JVC	November
Defcon 5	Data East	TBA
Descent	Interplay	December
Dragons Lair 2	ReadySoft	September
Dragons of the Square Table	Crystal Dynamics	TBA
FIFA Soccer	Electronic Arts	TBA
Fighting Fantasy	Domark	'96
Gex	Crystal Dynamics	TBA
Ghen Wars	Sega	September
Grand Slam Baseball	Sega	November
Jetski Rage	Velocity	TBA
John Madden Football	Electronic Arts	TBA
Kingdom o' Magic	SCI	TBA
Legacy of Kain	Crystal Dynamics	TBA
Mickey Thompsons Supercross	PlayMates	TBA
Minnesota Fats Pool Legend	Data East	TBA
MLBPA Baseball (provisional)	Konami	TBA
Mortal Kombat 2	Acclaim	October
Mortal Kombat 3	Trade West	TBA
Myst	Acclaim	September
NBA Action	Sega	November
NBA Basketball (provisional)	Konami	TBA
NBA Jam Tournament Edition	Acclaim	October
NFL Football (provisional)	Konami	TBA
NFL Quarterback Club '96	Acclaim	December
NHL All-Star Hockey	Sega	September
NHL Hockey	Electronic Arts	TBA
Off-World Interceptor	Crystal Dynamics	TBA
Parodius	Konami	TBA
PGA Tour Golf '96	Electronic Arts	TBA
Planet Pinball	Virgin Interactive	TBA
Primal Rage	Time Warner	November
Prime Time NFL Football	Sega	January '96
Project Overkill (provisional)	Konami	TBA
Rayman	Ubisoft	TBA
Return Fire	Time Warner	TBA
Return to Zork	Activision	December
Revolution X	Acclaim	December
Road Rash	Electronic Arts	TBA
Robotica	Acclaim	September
Romance of the Three Kingdoms 4	Koei	TBA
Screaming Wheels	JVC	December
Shanghai Triple Threat	Activision	TBA
Shell Shock	US Gold	TBA
Shockwave	Electronic Arts	TBA
Sim City 2000	Maxis	TBA
Skeleton Warriors	PlayMates	TBA
Solar Eclipse	Crystal Dynamics	TBA
Space Ace	ReadySoft	TBA
Split Realities	JVC	January '96
Spot Goes to Hollywood	Virgin Interactive	TBA
Street Fighter: The Movie	Capcom	TBA
Tank Commander	Domark	'96
The 11th Hour	Virgin Interactive	TBA
The Horde	Crystal Dynamics	TBA
Thunderhawk 2	US Gold	TBA
Virusa's Forces	JVC	November
Virtua Cop	Sega	December
Virtua Fighter 2	Sega	December
Virtual Pool	Interplay	TBA
VR Virtua Racing	Time Warner	August
Waterworld	Ocean	TBA
3D Baseball '95	Crystal Dynamics	TBA

ng special



Q. Can a Japanese Saturn play US Saturn games, and vice versa?

No — at least, not without taking a soldering iron and a pair of wire

clippers to the innards of a machine and installing a rocker switch to alternate between the two different machine "modes." This process is now well known in the specialist game store/dealer community, and shouldn't cost more than \$75. **NEXT Generation** warns, however, that such under-the-hood tweaking voids any warranty that Sega and/or the dealer may provide upon the initial purchase of the hardware. (Email us at ngonline@imagine-inc.com if you're having trouble locating someone willing to provide the service.)

So why the incompatibility? Sega's official line is that it seeks to curb the trading of games between different territories to ease the tweaking of software to account for different cultural standards, be they nudity, violence, or racial issues (Japanese games, for example, will often cast African-American characters in the roll of bad guys or cannon fodder, not a practice that would be appreciated in the US). But it's largely the commercial issue of buying character/movie licenses on a local level that prevents the global marketing of software, and the fact that currency and market fluctuations often enable the selling of the same software at different prices around the world that are the real reasons behind Sega's desire to separate the US from Europe and Japan.



Q. So what's with those weird TV ads?

Sega knows (although it would never admit it publicly) that of the "big three" (Saturn, PlayStation, and Ultra 64), Saturn is the weakest machine — in terms of system power, at least. Hence at every opportunity, Sega has attempted to divert attention from the technical specifications of its machine and instead focus on the issue of its expertise in producing quality games. Check this lot out: "There's endless talk about next-generation technology — state of the art microprocessors, polygon counts, texture-mapping, etc — but most consumers aren't concerned about the technical marvels that lie 'under the hood.'" Instead, their focus is on the experience of playing games on the system... Are polygons rendered because they can be, or do they add up to a never-before-seen, immersive experience that takes the player out there, past the fringes of known experience? — *Sega Saturn White Paper*

"After all, a game system is just a paperweight without the right kind of games. It's the game software that makes the system." — *Steve Payne, VP Product Development, Sega of America*

"There's been tremendous hype about next generation videogame platforms, and how many bits, polygons per second, and MIPS they will have. But the bottom line is the software..." — *Michael Ribero,*

Executive Vice President of Marketing, Sega of America

In Sega's ad, this man, the "sphinxter," receives a sensory signal from the human nerve center — via the Saturn's effect



"Consumers don't buy a game system for its own sake, they buy it for the fun they anticipate that the game software will provide." — *Bill White, VP Marketing, Sega of America*

Recognize the common thread? And Sega's TV commercials are simply an extension of this desire to fight PlayStation and Ultra 64 on the battlefield of subjective emotions and on Sega's track



record, as opposed to any concrete facts or system specifications.

Sega's Michael Ribero goes on to explain that the "Theater of the Eye" TV commercials are really aimed "directly at the right side of the brain with visuals that show consumers how Sega Saturn makes you feel emotionally and even physiologically. We believe that 'sensory' oriented advertising will stimulate huge demand for the product by creating a yearning for the experience of Sega Saturn."

How the infamous "Sphinxter" figures (see below) in this equation isn't completely explained.

Q. What accessories can I buy for Saturn right now?

At the time of going to press, these peripherals were available for Sega Saturn:



• Memory cartridge

Enables games to be saved.

• Steering Wheel

For use primarily with *Daytona USA*, but will also be compatible with future driving games.



• Four-player tap

So far unexploited, the four-player tap is loaded with multiplayer potential

• Virtua Fighter Joystick

As a more arcade-like alternative to the standard six-button joystick

Sega also promises to release a light gun (except they won't call it that) for use with the upcoming home version of *Virtua Cop*. It is expected that one in four Saturn owners will also purchase an official Sega Saturn peripheral.

Q. So what does **NEXT Generation** recommend?

By the summer of 1996, it should be fairly clear as to how the next generation race will pan out. At that time, either Sony or Sega will have established a market leadership, Nintendo's Ultra 64 will be on the shelves — available for hands-on testing — and 3DO's M2 will be bowing gamers or might still merely be vaporware.

But a year, of course, is a long time to wait, and it's a well known fact that in the world of consumer electronics there will always be something more powerful, smaller, more "cool," and cheaper released "next year." But, as Trip Hawkins said in 1994 (but not so much in 1995, with M2 in the pipeline): "at some point you simply have to jump in and start enjoying your life."

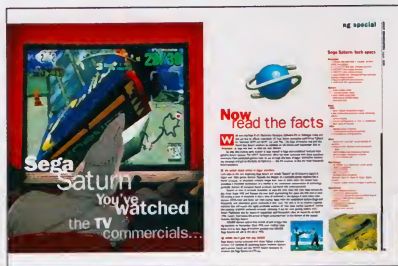
Play the games. Compare them for yourself, and weigh, in your own mind, the pros and cons of waiting even longer for the Next Big Thing. And then, enjoy your purchase — videogaming is meant to be fun, and let's hope it stays that way.

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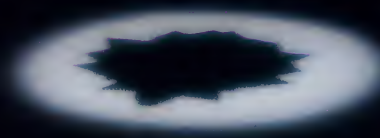
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Played in **Japan**

The next wave of Far Eastern RPGs



Japan has found huge success in exporting its videogame culture around the globe.

But one genre has stubbornly refused to travel in great numbers.

NEXT Generation looks at the latest developments in Japan's long-running love affair with the RPG

The staple component of Japan's national videogame diet is a genre that is as far removed from mainstream Western tastes as any of the nation's famously idiosyncratic tendencies. Shooting, driving, fighting, and strategy games are certainly popular enough, but the mainstay of the Japanese game industry is undeniably the RPG (Role-Playing Game).

The attraction is such that, on the release of a particularly long-awaited title, potential buyers camp out in shop doorways overnight, and by morning, lines of eager gamers can be seen snaking around the blocks of the major consumer electronics districts. At one stage the situation got so out of hand, with so many children skipping school and even respectable business types taking time off to get ahold of the latest big release, that the government placed restrictions on the marketing of certain RPG titles, stipulating that they could only be launched to the public on a Sunday.

RPGs have permeated deep into the Japanese culture, with many games crossing over into mainstream entertainment. Launches are backed by the lure of big-name music, movie, and television pop stars; the games themselves are designed in part by the biggest creative personalities of the comics and animation worlds; and, as with any other entertainment product, television and press campaigns are used to build public awareness.

To Westerners, however, their appeal is notoriously difficult to fathom. The outpour

Arc The Lad (PlayStation)



Mirroring Square Soft's recent Japanese Super Famicom hit, *Chrono Trigger*, *Arc The Lad* uses side-on and pseudo-3D views as well as straightforward overhead perspectives

With hundreds of richly detailed locations, a soundtrack specially recorded by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and gameplay that looks set to rival even Square Soft's famed 16-bit RPGs, *Arc The Lad* is one of SCE's most ambitious PlayStation projects.

The man behind the game is Toshio Tsuchida, developer of *G-Craft* (he also produced the acclaimed SNES shooter *Assault Suits Valken* for NCS).

"RPGs should enable a player to enjoy any given situation," he believes. "There's not much fun in moving around programmed characters, worrying about their attack and defense power, so we've

introduced a new system to this game called the Field Battle System."

This routine enables the game to flow more realistically. Says producer Ryouji Akagawa: "In previous RPGs, when something happens, there's a scene to explain the situation, and then a battle scene. *Arc* doesn't have that — battle scenes start very smoothly."

Arc also makes novel use of the PlayStation's memory card facility. The game will be produced in two parts, with the sequel appearing later this year. When you've finished part one, you'll be able to carry over all saved details to the second to continue the adventure.

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Classic action RPGs: *Y's I and II* (PC Engine) and *Zelda: A Link To The Past* (SFC)



Arc's circle command system is clearly borrowed from *Secret Of Mana* (top left). Rich graphic touches are abundant (above left). The merry band meet a tree spirit (above right)

Japanese **RPGs****Riglord Saga** (Saturn)

Excellent use of 3D (above). During battles, a grid is laid over your current surroundings (right)

Riglord Saga is part of the first wave of Saturn RPGs, along with Sega's own *Virtual Hydlide*. But whereas *Virtual Hydlide* uses a fixed 3D into-the-screen perspective, *Riglord Saga* adopts an overhead view which zooms and spins to follow the action.

The result is an attractive-looking game with a unique hilly landscape whose many vantage points provide an extra strategic element. Certain characters even have limitations that force them to keep to low ground — Hector, for example, can't climb hills because of a claimed bad back!

Those familiar with Sega's Genesis *Shining Force* series will find *Riglord Saga*'s control and combat routines familiar. Movement is a step-by-step affair, conducted with the aid of a grid superimposed over the play area, and combat is handled in a similar fashion.

The innately stilted nature of this



The female contingent of your party can magically alter a landscape's relief

system, however, could limit the game's appeal to only the most patient RPGers. But with more than 150 forms of attack, a vast range of environments, and plenty of spells, *Riglord Saga* will prove an interesting prospect for those willing to take it on.



Riglord Saga features many interior scenes, all presented using texture-mapped polygons (above left). As in many RPGs, snowy wastes form part of the playing area (above right)



SquareSoft and Enix is closely monitored by a close-knit cult of often-vocal US gamers, but the sales figures of these games never challenge the *Donkey Kong*

Countrys or *John Madden Football*s of the US gaming world as best-sellers.

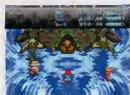
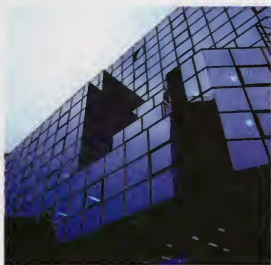
US gamers accustomed to computer RPGs (a trend beginning in the late '80s with 3D maze-based titles like EA's *The Bard's Tale* and FTL's *Dungeon Master*) often find the nuances of Japanese-bred roleplayers uncomfortable and unwieldy. Instead of first person-perspective adventures, the norm is third person-viewed games like the *Dragon Quest* series (the most popular RPG in Japan in sales terms), which have only tenuous links to the Western concept of the RPG.

The entertainment in such games is not derived from roaming 3D mazes, collecting gold and treasure, and slaying characters in order to build experience levels, but from following the convoluted tales of a vast cast of heroes, heroines, and villains (each of which has his/her unique character traits) through a bewildering variety of locations and situations. As well as engaging in 'hours' worth of turn-based combat, characters experience personal hardships and dilemmas; they fall in love, suffer illness, and build relationships with those around them. Rather than being determined solely by the player himself, the direction of such games is relatively preordained, which has led them to be tagged "interactive novels" — a term that has done nothing to endear them to already dismissive Western gamers.

The small, cult success these games enjoy in the US has only come about after a long courtship. Nintendo's *Zelda* games (NES, SNES) were the first and perhaps best-known champions of the cause to have found their way into homes this side of the hemisphere. But, as first rate as they are, they're action-based at heart and not true representatives of the RPG genre.

Final Fantasy III (the US translation of *Final Fantasy VI*, the latest in the series in Japan) is, however, the real deal. It has all the hallmarks of the classic RPG, including a complex combat system, comprehensive party management, and magic items and spells by the cauldronful. It was the eighth biggest-selling SNES cart in the US in 1994 — and it only went on sale in the fourth quarter of the year. But it's still way behind the likes of *Mortal Kombat II* and *Donkey Kong Country*, both of which, ironically, paled against *FFIII*'s performance in Japan.

The genre's potential outside Japan has been bolstered by the decision of Square



Square Soft's HQ (top) and, clockwise from above left: *Chrono Trigger*, *Secret of Mana* and *Final Fantasy III*

Soft, the creator of *Final Fantasy*, to go it alone in the States and create an RPG using American staff, American development techniques, and — perhaps misguidedly — American folklore and traditions for its background and story lines. The result is *Secret Of Evermore*, a game that steals much from Square's much-admired *Secret Of Mana* and is due for release later this year. Another indication of the RPGs growing Western following has been given by Enix, who has made no secret of combing the UK's development community in search of potential partners for a European push.

But it's in Japan where the real activity takes place, and in such a lucrative market, competition between the main players is fierce. When Square Soft announced its new RPG, *Chrono Trigger*, arch-rival Enix was quick to counter with news of a new installment of *Dragon Quest*, bombarding Japan's gaming press with taster shots and snippets of information. The game wasn't due to appear for several months, but keeping up with its competitor was as much a priority for Enix as serving its consumers.

And this rivalry shows no sign of letting up: Enix has just released the first details of its latest game, *Mystic Ark*, and, sure enough, Square countered with information about the long-awaited sequel to *Seiken Densetsu 2* (known as *Secret Of Mana* in the West).

A steady stream of mediocre efforts from other publishers has made life relatively easy

Seiken Densetsu 3 (SFC)



Square's typically high graphic standards prevail (above and above right). Flammie makes a welcome return (right)



Square Soft's *Secret Of Mana*, (otherwise known as *Seiken Densetsu 2*) has an unparalleled reputation among discerning SNES RPG fans. It combines the accessibility of *Zelda: A Link To The Past* with the intricacy of the *Final Fantasy* series to astonishing graphic and gameplay effect.

And now its sequel looks like building on that winning formula. The latest installment of the game has a playing area three to four times the size of the original's, and offers six selectable characters rather than the three available previously.

The simultaneous three-player facility remains (via a multitap), but Square has also taken into consideration the needs of solo players — nonplaying characters are now imbued with extra artificial intelligence for less hassle play.

Other significant changes include day-to-night transitions — and their effect on monster encounters, and so on — and a new battle system which allows for even more logical fighting.

Seiken Densetsu 3 is shaping up to be another classic action RPG from the leader in the field.



Square Soft has excelled itself with the game's bosses (top left and right and above left). The characters selected from the six available affect the course of the quest (above right)

Japanese **RPGs**3D0 developers: **Micro Cabin**

Micro Cabin has made a name for itself with its swift 3D routines on the 3D0. The interior sections of its new RPG (above left and top right) feature intricately detailed objects and furniture. The combat sections (above right) are reminiscent of Bullfrog's *Populous*

Of all the next generation machines, the 3D0 is the most undernourished in terms of RPGs. Micro Cabin's *The Life Stage* and *Power's Kingdom*, which were both released last year, are the only examples of the genre to speak of, but their generally dull gameplay is a poor advertisement for the Japanese developer's true potential.

Now the company is looking to build a more solid reputation with another 3D0 venture. The project — which is still unnamed — uses polygons but eschews the style of existing 3D RPGs on the 3D0, such as the popular *Alone In The Dark* and *Dr. Hauzer*, preferring instead to follow a more traditional Japanese path.

"The engine in this game is much more powerful than that of our first project, *The Life Stage*," says Mr. Nagai, chief programmer on the project. "The graphics, including the maps and all of the buildings'

interiors, are all in 3D. Of course, the viewpoints change freely, and the result is like a 3D version of former 2D RPGs.

"The 3D graphics are reminiscent of *Populous*," he continues. "The graphics will switch to battle mode when enemies appear. In the battle scenes, magical effects are gorgeous — create an earthquake, for example, and a big hole will appear in the ground which you can throw enemies into."

So, unlike *Arc The Lad*, the Micro Cabin project is obviously designed to drag the genre into the next generation through its presentation, while clinging firmly to established RPG values in its gameplay.

Although still some way off completion, the game is progressing steadily, with smooth, detailed environments and a fluid battle system already in place. 3D0 owners will be banking on core gameplay to match the graphics — and on Micro Cabin's skills pushed to the limit.



for these two companies — if, indeed, the term "easy" could be applied to the work of either firm. Major RPGs are huge undertakings: "It can take up to two years to decide

upon some of the finer aspects of the game," admits Enix's Mr. Futami (producer of many SNES games, including *Actraiser*). Square's Japanese office houses some 264 employees, with about 80% of its staff dedicated directly to software development. The most recent installment of the *Final Fantasy* series came to life thanks to the efforts of a 40-strong team, and it has a reputation among devotees as one of the most beautifully designed and absorbing videogames ever made.

Despite — or perhaps because of — the success of RPGs on 16-bit platforms, the genre is only just beginning to figure among next generation titles. With such a solid installed user base of 16-bit machines, Japan is not as quick to discard existing technology as the West. Square Soft, for one, is playing it safe: "We are confident about the Super Famicom format," says the company's Mie Mizushima. "We want to wait a while to see what direction the market will develop in order to get involved with any particular new platform." It is heavily rumored, however, that Square Soft is currently one of Nintendo's secret Ultra 64 developers.

Enix expresses similar beliefs: "There have only been 500,000 Saturns and PlayStations sold, and in business terms, these figures are too small for us — when we're releasing *Dragon Quest* games, we're looking at selling around 3,000,000 cartridges," says Futami.

One thing is clear: The differences between next-generation RPGs and 16-bit ones will not be as obvious as the changes already seen in other genres. Tried and trusted game engines are being cloned to form the



Micro Cabin's first 3D0 title of note was *Power's Kingdom* (known as *Guardian War* in the West). Sadly, its colorful characters were overshadowed by severely humdrum gameplay



Enix's Japanese Headquarters (above). The first firm installed success on the SNES in the West with *Actraiser* (left)

backbone of titles like SCE's *Arc The Lad*, and the overhead viewpoint remains dominant. The new wave will benefit through rich backdrops, clever, spot graphic effects, and perhaps most of all, enhanced soundtracks.

"It's become popular recently for real orchestras to play music to be recorded on CD, but in *Arc The Lad* we did the opposite," says producer Ryouji Akagawa. "The London Philharmonic Orchestra played the music which Masahiro Ando composed, and we'll be putting that into the game. The PlayStation can play 24 sounds simultaneously, and we've made the best use of this."

"It would have been easier to create a 3D world with 3D graphics, but we wanted to express depth with 2D graphics," claims Toshio Tsuchida, the independent director of the project, who produced *Front Mission* for Square earlier this year. If his feelings are representative of the RPG industry in general, well-realized traditional bitmap games look likely to continue to dominate for some time.

"If we use polygons in RPGs the games will become nicer to look at, but the content will not change," asserts Futami. "We don't think the basic RPG will change just because developers are utilizing polygons."

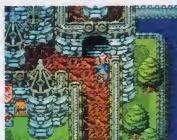
Given the long development periods for 16-bit games, and the fact that up to 40 people are involved in each project, it's easy to see how even the giants of the trade might be frightened off by the extra workload resulting from moving into 3D territory. Enix will admit, however, that it's willing to experiment on established platforms. "We did something of a trial with a game called *Project J* on the SFC in December," says Futami. "It was a cross between an RPG and a simulation, with the player not controlling the hero himself, but using an elf character as a guide. We've sold 1,300,000 copies in Japan, so it's been a success. We're also diversifying with *Mystic Ark*. It's going to be a mix of puzzle — similar to the puzzle sections of *The 7th Guest* — and standard adventure game."

Although the future of Japanese RPGs in the US looks decidedly hazy at present (at least in terms of significant increased following), two things can be predicted with some certainty. The first is that with a few developers having taken the first toddling steps into the uncharted realm of next generation technology, this has only increased the stakes in an already competitive market. How, or even if, this will affect both their structure at home, and their popularity abroad, remains to be seen.

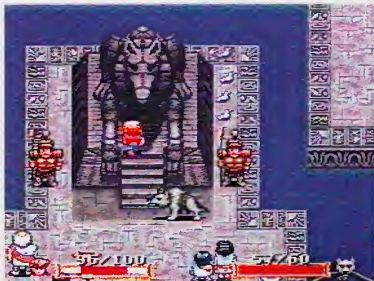
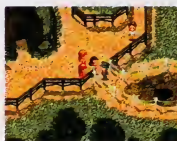
Secondly, RPGs will retain the interest in Japan that has seen them achieve an unassailable position in the market, and whether the West wants them or not, they're heading this way.

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And the rest...



Clockwise from top left: *Fajimaru* on the PlayStation uses a subtle color palette and some strong strategy elements; Sony Computer Entertainment's *Wizardry VII* continues the popular PC series on the PlayStation; Japanese RPG giant Enix is currently putting the finishing touches to *Mystic Ark* for the Super Famicom; Konami's *Suikoden* is, along with *Arc The Lad*, one of the more traditionally realized RPGs scheduled for the PlayStation; Enix is banking on the SFC's *Dragon Quest VI* replicating the phenomenal success of all five of its respected forebears



Clockwise from top left: Sega's *Blue Seed*, due on the Saturn shortly, is based on the popular Japanese anime of the same name; *Shining Wisdom* (Saturn) is being programmed by Sega's Sonic Team, and pays tribute to RPGs such as *Zelda III*; *Magic Knight Ray Earth* (Saturn) uses colorful anime-style

characters as its protagonists; *Lunatic Dawn*, an isometric RPG on the NEC PC-FX, is one of the first non-anime footage-based games for the machine; Square Soft USA's *Secret Of Evermore*, is its attempt to produce a Japanese-styled RPG for the finicky American market

PUMPS 1 GALLON A MINUTE.

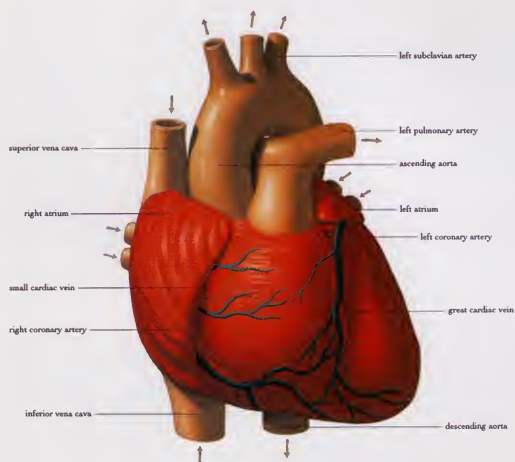


FIG. 34.—The Human Heart.

PUMPS 25 GALLONS A MINUTE.



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 Shin Shinobi Den **Saturn** Wing Arms **Saturn** Terminal Velocity **PC** Warcraft II **PC** Air Combat **PlayStation**



Special features on worldwide titles in development

Even with the next generation machines commanding the majority of the limelight, developers are still bringing new life to 16-bit gaming with innovative approaches to familiar genres (see *Vector Man*). This month, we also take a look behind the scenes at Peter Molyneux's Bullfrog and dig up news on the PlayStation's multiplayer future. For the full review of new releases be sure to check out the reviews section on page 68.

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The most famous ninja in videogame jumps onto a new platform

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Fly the unfriendly skies in Sega's WWII air combat simulator

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ng alphas

Bullfrog



In the seven years it has been in existence, Bullfrog has gained an unparalleled reputation for quality and innovation. As its leader, Peter Molyneux prepares to release a slew of new titles, **NEXT Generation** talks to the lords of the game about its plans for the rest of 1995



Bullfrog is on a bit of a high at the moment. Within the last six months it has released the most graphically advanced game ever on the PC, *Magic Carpet*; has been bought by EA for more than \$50 million; and has just cleaned up at the European Computer Trade Show (ECTS) awards. With the company's next wave of products about to break on the PC and PlayStation, **NEXT Generation** met the people who built the Bullfrog fortress and scrutinized the eight projects it's developing.

Bullfrog has always prided itself on developing original games, among them *Populous*, *Magic Carpet*, and *Theme Park*, which have all been praised for their eminently playable blend of action and strategy. And the company's next few releases look set to enhance that reputation still further.

One of those new games is *Dungeon Keeper*. "In my mind the roleplaying

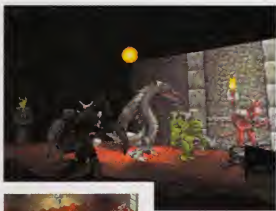
game hadn't changed much in the last seven or eight years," asserts Peter Molyneux, Bullfrog head honcho and lead programmer on *Dungeon Keeper*. "Traditionally, you always get to play the heroes — the all-round wonderful guy who saves the world. I thought it would be much more fun to play the evil ones — it's always fun to be evil!"

In *Dungeon Keeper*, the player supervises a dank collection of tunnels packed with 32 species of quarrelsome fiends. The goal of the game is to establish the mightiest, most treasure-laden labyrinth in the world — thus enhancing your magical and physical presence. Increasing your power results in a larger dungeon and a greater reputation, and as word of your achievements spread, more powerful bands of adventurers will attempt to plunder your trove.

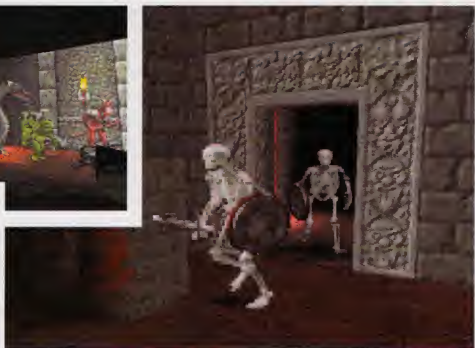
Bullfrog's games all require an alarming level of artificial intelligence, and *Dungeon Keeper* is no exception. The company has been focusing much effort on its AI team for some years (there's now a dedicated AI group working at its Guildford, UK offices), which has resulted in a new technique called "Personality Mapping."

"The AI has been evolving since *Populous*," explains Molyneux. "Each character in *Populous* occupied 48 bytes. That rose to 512 bytes in *Theme Park*, and now we're up to 1,024 in *Dungeon Keeper*. Each character has individual hearing, this or her own unique field of vision, an individual sense of smell... Some are even more curious than others and so come to investigate trouble faster."

Bullfrog's games all require an alarming level of artificial intelligence, and *Dungeon Keeper* is no exception



A selection of the 32 monsters currently resident in *Dungeon Keeper* (top). The views can be fully customized (middle). Pre-rendered card playing (above)



Dungeon Keeper's multiplayer mode is "the best ever," according to Molyneux. You can either control the dungeon or enter as a party of adventurers to engage in battle

Dungeon Keeper also benefits from Bullfrog's powerful lighting algorithms, used so effectively in *Magic Carpet's* water reflections. All surfaces can be factored in and calculated in realtime, so fireballs hurled down black corridors light the walls along their way before plunging the player back into darkness. The math is now so advanced that mirrors cast reflections with minimal slowdown.

Another forthcoming release is *Creation*. Since this subterranean odyssey was unveiled to the press in January 1994, its smooth-moving underwater scenery and surreal action have aroused much anticipation. *Creation* is Bullfrog's thriller, trading the pace of *Magic Carpet* for a slower, more tense style of gameplay.

Bullfrog has gone to great lengths to ensure that *Creation* is suitably atmospheric. Things become progressively ominous as your submarine plunges into the ocean depths, shooting off flares every five seconds to penetrate the gloom. Near the surface, digitized coral reefs contribute to the realism. And Bullfrog claims that it has developed fast-perspective scaling interpolation to reduce the ugly effects of zooming bitmaps.

And then, of course, there's *Magic Carpet 2*, the inevitable sequel to one of the best-received games of last year. "We did a lot of studying about what people liked about *Magic Carpet* and basically we found that people enjoyed

destroying things," says Molyneux. To accommodate this primitive urge, Bullfrog has included an additional 20 spells (including gravity wells and tidal waves) and introduced levels of casting skill for each. Nighttime missions are also included, which is where the new glass castle option comes into its own.

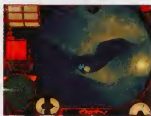
Magic Carpet 2 (like the majority of Bullfrog's new games) depends on a greatly enhanced version of the *Magic Carpet* engine. "The original graphics engine is two years old now," accepts Molyneux, "but with the developments we've made since then, it's now 75% faster." And the gameplay has also been tweaked — it's now more of an action-roleplaying game than an action-strategy one.

Theme Park has a successor, too, in the form of *Theme Hospital*. Peter Molyneux's first program was a business simulation, and it's quite evident that the desire to make money hasn't entirely been overshadowed by the desire to kill things. The game sees the player guide a hospital from the Middle Ages (where their ethos was "if it hurts, bleed it, or cut it off,") to the future, offering the chance to make serious money off the backs of helpless sick and disabled folk.

Bullfrog's remaining two games both use a revolutionary in-house technique called "Skeletal Mapping." "In most 3D games, the artist had to think of every



Theme Hospital is the second game in Bullfrog's designer series. The ability to inflict harm on innocent patients should make it a winner



Creation boasts a fractal seabed (top). The submarine's lights fade as it recedes into the depths (middle). Cut scenes create atmosphere (above)



High Octane, Bullfrog's first racing game, features multiplayer, armored, closed-circuit racing action. And you can bet that the enemy cars' AI will be smart

ng alphas



MIST, Bullfrog's tribute to Marvel-type superheroes, is perhaps the company's most unusual project. It uses Bullfrog's revolutionary "Skeletal Mapping" technique to transform the characters as their powers increase

move a character could perform and then draw the appropriate animation," explains Molyneux. "With our simulation, we calculate a skeleton and the program calculates any action you perform by itself."

MIST (*My Incredible Superhero Team*) is the working title for Bullfrog's November release. Each player takes control of a superhero whose mission is to protect his or her own city from invaders. Its real innovation lies in the ability to customize the characters — Bullfrog is hoping that the only limitation to the player's fun will be his or her own imagination.

"Through the use of Skeletal Mapping, each player gets to create his own superhero," explains Molyneux. "If you want to make him strong and give him rubber wings and death vision, then you can do that. But of course, they've all got their Achilles' heel."

The combination of a fully modeled city, textured polygon characters, and a dedicated Pentium mode running at 30 fps should be a powerful combination.

Biosphere is Bullfrog's 1995 homage to the title that made its name, *Populous*, combining the *Magic Carpet* engine (used for the scenery) with *Populous*' war game playing style. Skeletal Mapping is integral to the gameplay — players have to experiment with genetic engineering to develop new, ever more vicious forms of life, which are then used to destroy all of their rivals on the planet.

As **NEXT Generation** prepared this article, it uncovered details about a hitherto unknown Bullfrog project, due for release this summer: *High Octane* is a high-speed racing/shooting game.



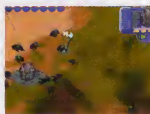
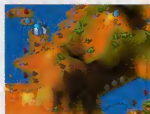
MIST takes place in a skyscraper-filled city which can be completely destroyed by the player. The game will incorporate a significant strategy element, but the multiplayer game will be action all the way

Why the secrecy? "Normally our games are very original, so we're not worried about people copying them," says Molyneux of the project, "but this one is a little derivative so we've kept it secret for longer." But it would seem certain that a multiplayer, closed-circuit racing game (with machine guns) would seem to be the order of the day.

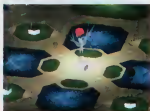
Bullfrog is one of the few successful companies today which has ignored the 16-bit consoles — Molyneux's dislike of them is well known (see interview in **NG 7**). But now the firm is striking out into new territory with its first in-house console game, the PlayStation title entitled *Syndicate Wars*.

Set in a city composed of SGI-modeled buildings which can be manipulated in realtime, *Syndicate Wars* is already looking stunning — even though its graphics are only 15% complete — with Bullfrog's lighting algorithms benefitting from the extra power provided by the PlayStation. Car headlights sweeping into the darkness and people running across reflective buildings are "second to none," according to Molyneux.

And we believe him.



Biosphere is arguably Bullfrog's most conventional game. The scenery is inspired by *Magic Carpet* (top). As shown, the characters are still rough (bottom)



The PC version of *Syndicate Wars* (top and above) can run in SVGA, although you'll need a Pentium



The PlayStation's power is evident in *Syndicate Wars*' lighting effects. Bullfrog intends the finished game to use the machine's two-player linkup capabilities (see *Head to Head*, page 50)

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Head to head



The prospect of multiplayer PlayStation games could give Sony's console a huge credibility boost. NEXT Generation gets connected



As developers strive to capture the look and feel of arcade games, one aspect of coin-ops' popularity has remained overlooked: multiplayer linkup

Capturing the visual finesse of modern coin-ops on a home console is a seductive goal for game programmers. And, given the increasingly close relationship between arcade and console technology, it's not an impossible task. However, as developers strive to capture the look and feel of popular arcade games (and in some cases, such as Namco's *Tekken*, achieve a perfect match), one aspect of coin-ops' popularity has remained overlooked: multiplayer linkup.

Home computers have long enjoyed the benefits of linkup potential. As well as 16-bit classics like Bullfrog's *Populous* and Geoff Crammond's *Stunt Car Racer* (which not only accommodated the connection of two Atari STs or two Amigas but even allowed an ST to be linked with an Amiga!), there's a large library of network and modem-linked games for the PC, including Id Software's legendary *Doom* and Interplay's *Descent*. Consoles, on the other hand, have had a tough time catering to no



The PlayStation's linkup cable (top) enables a pair of machines to be linked together for simultaneous two-player action. The cable — the first of a range of connecting devices planned by Sony — plugs into the serial port on the back of each machine. In order to fully appreciate the system, NEXT Generation was treated to an early playable version of Psygnosis' superb *Destruction Derby* (above, left), coded by Amiga veterans Reflections. The two-player mode caters for some splendid car-bending mayhem



Two-player gaming, mano a mano, is regarded by many as the ultimate videogaming thrill. Coin-op designers know this, and now home system designers are able to get in on the act

more than two players, not to mention multiple players, very well.

Being restricted to a single screen is the most conspicuous hurdle, but multiplayer games can usually be designed around this drawback. Multitap adapters have long catered for the party potential of classics such as *BomberMan*, and sports games like *FIFA International Soccer* cope admirably on a single screen. However, driving games, by their very nature, require that each player has his own display, and therein lies a problem.

The split-screen format is the traditional method of tackling the multiplayer driving game. The best examples of this are the superbly playable SNES game *Super Mario Kart* and its protégés. But although the twin letterbox system (or quadrupal, as is the case with *Street Racer*) can be used to great effect, it usually demands a detrimental reduction in the quality and size of graphics, in order to keep the speed of the game up. Another drawback is that a split-screen display enables each player to see exactly what the other participant is doing, so that it's far harder to surprise your opponent. (Japanese arcades have side-stepped this problem by linking together fighter cabinets and positioning them back to back.)

Sony is one of the first companies to try to replicate the multiplayer experience on consoles, although Atari already has a two-player link for the Jaguar (and a decent version of *Doom*), and Sega is developing a similar system for the Saturn. Sony's PlayStation link-up cable enables two machines to be hooked together, each using a separate television. Despite the fact that the

cable hasn't until recently been available, **NEXT Generation** was invited to test an early version of Psygnosis' link-up racing game *Destruction Derby*, which now incorporates two-player code and is scheduled for release shortly after the machine's US launch.

Newcastle, UK-based developer Reflections has been working on *Destruction Derby* for the last nine months — the team bolted on the necessary code just days before **NEXT Generation** saw the game. At this stage in development, booting up the game on both machines requires swapping a single disc from one PlayStation to the other but, unsurprisingly, the finished game will require one CD for each machine — to minimize error correction and game crashes, according to Sony, although the ability to play the CD soundtrack through both TVs is obviously a consideration, too. When the game is loaded on both consoles, each program looks for the other machine and then the code is synchronized so that both players are represented onscreen.

The version that **NEXT Generation** played was approximately 55% complete and featured just one track — an oval *Daytona*-style affair packed with 21 cars — although the finished game will include a remarkable 50 to 60 courses based on five or six graphic themes. A programmable replay system will also be incorporated, as well as a wide variety of views, including an airship perspective.

But the game's most outstanding feature is the realtime deformation of the vehicles — unlike *Ridge Racer*, smashes and pile-ups really do affect

Derby's most outstanding feature is the realtime deformation of the vehicles — unlike Ridge Racer, smashes and pile-ups really do affect the cars' bodywork

ng alphas



The huge video wall in *Destruction Derby* provides a simultaneous display of the action. Note the transparent smoke — one of the many superb details in the game



Destruction Derby (from top): taking pole position at the start; It doesn't take very long for traffic to build up; the ensuing chaos gradually takes its toll; the only vehicles that are at all safe are part of the scenery (above)

the cars' bodywork. The transparent smoke and steam that billows from crumpled hoods and tailpipes also makes a convincing contribution to realism. And, perhaps best of all, crashes can be saved onto the PlayStation's memory cards, enabling you to record those classic moments to savor at your leisure.

Despite the density of on-track traffic and the level of graphic detail, the action in *Destruction Derby* remains surprisingly fast and smooth. Because of the cable's high baud rate (and Reflection's concerted efforts in this area), the linkup has minimal effect on the game's frame rate. In fact, the only data transmitted through the cable is the cars' X and Y coordinates (rather than all the screen information), and the result is that there's virtually no noticeable loss of speed in the entire race. Sony claims that the system has been designed to cope with games running at any frame rate — a title such as *Tekken*, for example, which runs in one frame (60 frames per second) would suffer very little in terms of speed loss.

As well as *Destruction Derby*, Psygnosis has three other PlayStation projects in the pipeline compatible with the two-player linkup (see opposite): *Vipeout* (NG 7), *Assault Rigs*, and *Krazy Ivan* (NG 7). At the time of writing, the company was busy

preparing linkup versions to be available for the game's debut.

Despite the inconvenience of having to set up two television sets (although in Japan the availability of widescreen, double-tuner TVs means that both displays can sit side by side on the same screen), software developers seem keen to take advantage of the PlayStation's linkup capacity. Given the level of commitment from companies such as Psygnosis, as well as the efforts of many third parties, a two-player head-to-head option could soon become a standard feature of PlayStation games.

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PlayStation link-up cable

The PlayStation's linkup cable will be released in Japan in July for ¥2000 (\$22). This will coincide with the first game to take advantage of it — *Metal Jacket*. The cable has a peak baud rate of 4 Mbits/sec and feeds data directly to the CPU, which processes it and then transmits it to the other machine at the baud rate specified by the programmer.

The only multitap system currently in development at Sony Computer Entertainment is a multi-joypad system similar to the SNES' Super Multitap, which will allow four pads to be connected to each joypad port. When used in conjunction with the linkup cable, it will enable up to 16 players to compete against each other. Sixteen-player *BomberMan*, anyone?



Other PlayStation linkup games

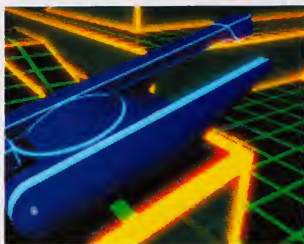
Psygnosis

In addition to *Destruction Derby*, three other Psygnosis games are scheduled to use the PlayStation's serial link.

Krazy Ivan (top, top right) is a futuristic combat simulator in which two serial-linked players engage in a head-to-head battle while drone robots shoot at them.

Assault Rigs (bottom left) will feature a *Cybersled*-style one-on-one battle, but another mode will let two players compete to collect a set number of objects before escaping from the arena.

Wipeout (bottom right), the futuristic racing game premiered in **NG 7**, will offer a head-to-head mode with six other craft and a one-on-one battle mode (a la *Super Mario Kart*).



Metal Jacket

(Pony Canyon)

Metal Jacket, first shown in **NG 4**, will be the first linkup game to be released for the PlayStation in Japan. It is very possible that Pony Canyon will bundle the game and the cable in one package — like Artdink's *A.I.V. Evolution* pack, which included a PlayStation mouse and memory card — although this has yet to be confirmed.

NEXT Generation recently visited the company's Tokyo offices and got to grips with an early version of the two-player linkup. Compared to the best 3D seen on the PlayStation, *Metal Jacket*'s environments are surprisingly crude, with a poor level of graphic detail and a disappointingly low speed. However, they do conceal some upbeat gameplay, and the extensive range of game configurations could give *Metal Jacket* some longevity. The game was released July 14 in Japan.



It's possible to jump from building to building in *Metal Jacket* (top). The game can be configured to enable each player to fight either as part of the same team of robots or simply head to head. A variety of different climactic environments can be selected

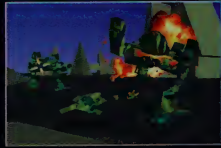
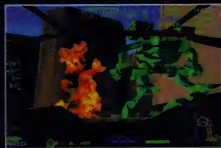


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VectorMan

Format:	Genesis
Publisher:	Sega
Developer:	Blue Sky
Release Date:	November
Origin:	US

Sega's answer to *DKC*? 16-bit gaming gets one last chance at the platform title with Blue Sky's ballsy new hero



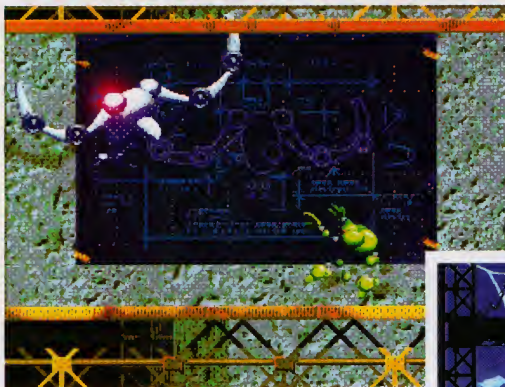
The detailed backgrounds, complete with peculiar lighting effects, are the perfect stage for the disjointed motions of Blue Sky's new hero. The hero is made up of "Vectorballs," invisibly connected, rounded polygons

In a strange platform adventure that looks like a cross between the ill-fated *Ballz* and *Mega Man* (with a little of *Earthworm Jim*'s swagger thrown in for good measure), Blue Sky Software (which brought us *Joe Montana Sports Talk Football* and *Jurassic Park* for the Genesis) looks to redefine this familiar genre. *VectorMan* must save a futuristic Earth from mixed up robots (again) and despite its minimalist story line, it seems that the title is meant to be a winking parody of itself.



Even though his body is made up of relatively few pieces, Vectorman's smooth, 60-fps (frame per second), "vector piece" animation delivers a surprisingly realistic feel of motion and theatrical emotion

ng alphas



Bold bosses are fun to watch, but the side-scrolling format is familiar

After being forced to scrap plans for an X-men Genesis title, the development team took animated routines which were to be used as map- and cut-scenes for the game and created an original title around them. Rich Karp, the lead programmer for the *VectorMan* project explains, "I had wanted to try creating a main character which used multiple pieces to make up a single character." The multiple pieces, called "Vectorballs," are rounded polygons connected by invisible lines enabling them to move as a unit. Just about all of the central characters in the game are modeled in this hypnotic fashion, with

hands, feet, and expressions drawn on to increase the realism. The Genesis' 16-bit architecture has also been pushed to the limit by the game's 60-fps animation, lens flare effects that light up the entire screen, and animated video walls.

While the high speed animation never misses a beat,

VectorMan's morphing abilities are also impressive as the hero transforms into a jet fighter, a Sherman tank, a missile, and a helicopter; special character attacks include the Rapid Fire Bolo, Shockwave, and the Nucleus Shield. All of these varying effects are made possible by a new engine the Blue Sky team calls "vector piece" animation. This engine uses software algorithms to generate key animation on the fly, instead of taking up CD-ROM space by storing individual frames in memory (RAM). The routines are completely invisible and deliver high speed animation at a fraction of the normal space required.

It's questionable whether or not this single game has the power and appeal necessary to breathe life into Sega's already near-forgotten system, but if any new title does have a chance this winter holiday, it's going to be *VectorMan*.

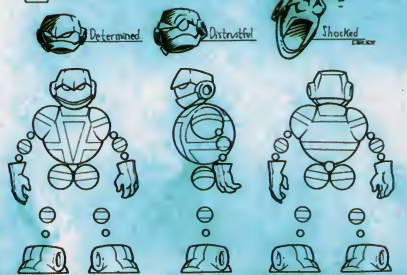
Keep your eyes peeled for a November '95 release.



Lighting effects are used throughout the cartridge to enhance dramatic scenes, surpassing even Shiny's *Earthworm Jim*

VECTORMAN

Made! Sheet



The multipiece makeup of Vectorman and his foes ensures that there's always plenty of action (top). The hero's many facial expressions (above)

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Duke Nukem 3D

Format: **PC**Publisher: **US Gold**Developer: **Apogee**Release Date: **Available now
(shareware)**Origin: **US**

Apogee's post-Doom PC blaster adds a few significant gameplay tweaks to the maze/shooter genre



Some of the doors can be kicked in (top). Spent shells are ejected (above)

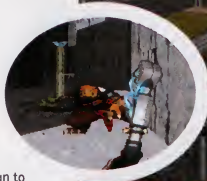
Considering Apogee's heritage of 3D maze games, it's not surprising that the company is working on a new series of labyrinthine blasters. There are currently four games in development, the most advanced of which is *Duke Nukem 3D* (unimaginatively named after one of Apogee's first commercial hits, plain old *Duke Nukem*).

Apogee's most recent maze game, *Rise Of The Triads*, was fun to play, but very derivative. So it's refreshing to discover that *Duke Nukem 3D* features considerable gameplay enhancements. Chief among these is a fully interactive world: shoot a light and it flickers; shoot a containment window and objects are sucked out. Some of the biggest weapons even demolish entire walls. These additions make a significant difference to the player's sense of immersion in the game.

It's also possible to swim through water-filled tunnels — complete with bubbles floating to the surface — to access sealed-off areas of the map, as well as to climb skyscrapers to gain better vantage points. The game is fully light-sourced, with mirrors, reflective surfaces, and translucent sprites all adding to the atmosphere.



The plasma cannon is just one weapon in an extensive range of hardware



Apogee's interpolation routines have reduced pixellation to a minimum (top). Another enemy is dispatched with gory glee (above)

Video cameras can be accessed by players with the correct code, enabling them to "spy" on their opponents

Perhaps the most revolutionary aspect of *Duke Nukem 3D* stems from Apogee's desire to improve the multiplayer game. Scattered around the levels are strategically placed video cameras. These can be accessed by players with the correct code, enabling them to "spy" on the activities of their opponents and therefore lay booby traps — including laser-activated mines which explode when the beam is broken — with more precision.

Apogee has been around since 1987 and has an enviable list of titles behind it. With *Duke Nukem 3D* (and, later this year, *Ruins*, *Blood*, and *Shadow Warrior*), it's almost certain to get a higher profile.

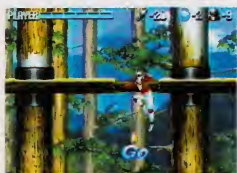


Shin Shinobi Den

Eight years after his first arcade outing, Sho gets another chance to show off his Ninja skills, this time in the Saturn update of Sega's classic action title



This Oriental masked boss appears in impressive 3D (top). Blood is a new addition to the series (above). And yes, a minecart level has been included (above right)



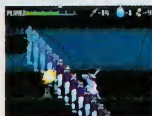
Shin Shinobi Den's blend of digitized and hand-drawn (and somewhat) 3D graphics has mixed results (above and middle)

Format:	Saturn
Publisher:	Sega
Developer:	Sega
Release Date:	July (Japan)
Origin:	Japan

Initially scheduled for release last December, *Shin Shinobi Den* is one of the most long-awaited titles in the Saturn's early software schedule. The game follows the further adventures of Sho, a Karatedogi-clad Ninja who first appeared in the hugely playable '87 *Shinobi* coin-op, then featured in a sequel, *Shadow Dancer*, and also starred in one of Sega's first Genesis games, *Revenge of Shinobi*. *Shin Shinobi Den* (New Legend Of Shinobi), in the same vein as *Super Shinobi* with a more pedestrian pace than the coin-ops and a wider range of attacks, features the standard sword swipe, a shuriken throw, and the devastating somersault shuriken launch. Sho's range of Ninja magic has also been updated, and the resulting effects are more eye-popping than ever.

The most obvious departure from previous *Shinobi* games is the depiction of Sho himself and the plethora of enemies he faces, not to mention the game's predilection for bloodletting: a swift slash of Sho's blade can cleave an opponent in two, which is accompanied by a substantial outpouring of gore.

Shin Shinobi Den will perform well due to its name alone, and it appears to have almost every element in place to enable it to do justice to its heritage. And with the right tweaks, it could well become one of the Saturn's strongest straight action titles.



Sho has a finite number of magical attacks offering a variety of different effects

Wing Arms

Format: **Saturn**
 Publisher: **Sega**
 Developer: **Sega**
 Release Date: **August (Japan)**
 Origin: **Japan**



All aircraft are prop-driven, in keeping with the game's WWII theme (middle). A cockpit view is selectable (above).

With PlayStation *Ace Combat* on the horizon, Sega's new World War II shooter needs to be a high-flier



Although not explicitly described as a conversion of the 1994 coin-op *Wing War*, *Wing Arms* on the Saturn bears more than a few similarities to Sega's Model 1-modeled polygon flight sim.

After selecting one of seven World War II aircraft, including a *Spitfire* and a *Mustang*, you either press on into Mission or Versus mode – which is not, unfortunately, a multiplayer experience, but instead involves a dogfight to the death with a computer-controlled enemy.

The tasks in Mission mode vary wildly, with set goals including the interception of a convoy, the destruction of opposing ships, and a relatively straightforward seek-and-destroy affair aimed at a ground target.

The game's polygon arenas are heavily detailed, and the weight of texture mapping is sure to have an adverse affect on the speed of graphic manipulation. But flight sim devotees will argue that gameplay is where it's at, and if Sega can transfer at least the marvelous flying feel of *Wing War* to the Saturn, it will have another important 3D title in its library.



Few Saturn games can compete with *Wing Arms'* level of detail (top). A choice of three aircraft is available

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Terminal Velocity

Veteran PC developer Apogee aims for its 29th shareware success

Format: PC

Publisher: 3D Realms

Developer: Terminal Reality/3D Realms

Release Date: Available now (shareware)

Origin: US



The tunnel sections provide some exciting blasting action (top). A blood-red background provides an indication of this level's deadly nature and mood (bottom)

This game is best described as a hybrid of *Magic Carpet* and *Descent* — a combination that will delight the vast majority of PC gamers

Apogee is one of those firms that has lived for a long time in the shadow of others. In 1987, it came up with the "Apogee Model,"

whereby the first installment of a game is released as shareware and the subsequent sections sold direct — an idea on which Id Software later built its unparalleled reputation.


However, the first release from Apogee's sister company, 3D Realms, might just wrestle some of the glory back from Id. *Terminal Velocity* is best described as a hybrid of *Magic Carpet* and *Descent* — a combination that will delight the vast majority of PC gamers. The game gives the player total freedom to explore, dispensing with tedious manuals and infinite button options, and concentrates instead on providing an immediately accessible playing experience. A multiplayer network also enables up to eight players to take part.

The graphics engine, developed by Mark Randel (the name behind the Microsoft *Flight Simulator 5* engine) is one of the most advanced ever seen on the PC; even on a 66 MHz 486, the animation is smooth and fast. A solid mixture of shaded polygons and bitmaps portray the game worlds, which range from ice caverns to primeval landscapes, complement the action perfectly.

The shareware version is now available on anonymous FTP sites; to download it, try ftp.uml.edu.



Cruising over a remote settlement (top). Enemies swoop in as you fly over the clouds; one of the weapons in use (middle). Note the hazy fog effect blending into the background (above)



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Warcraft II:

Tides Of Darkness

Format: **PC CD-ROM**
 Publisher: **Blizzard (Davidson)**
 Developer: **Blizzard**
 Release Date: **December**
 Origin: **US**

With *Tides of Darkness*, Blizzard breaks out the big guns in a fantastic universe

The news of the release itself is really no big deal. After the special fantasy-meets-strategy blend of the original *Warcraft* landed on the top 10 sales charts in 1994, a sequel was almost inevitable. What's amazing is that rather than churning out a predictable piece of shovelware, Blizzard has taken the time and effort to develop a sequel that is shaping up to what could be one of the most promising strategy games of this year.

In addition to a whole new cast of land units, including Dwarves, dragons, Elves, and others undecided as of yet, *Warcraft II* adds the entirely new elements of sea and air combat. In keeping with the game's original fantasy feel, players will get a chance to command legions that contain griffons, dragons, zeppelins, and even submarines. More intuitive than the original, *Warcraft II* includes an advanced AI routine programmed to learn how different players prefer to do battle, and works to counteract their strengths. All in all, the game will feature 24 scenarios split between Human and Orc teams, including two additional veteran battles for gamers who want a stepped up challenge.

Other features are to include full SVGA graphics, new vocals for both Humans and Orcs, head-to-head modem play, and even a network mode enabling up to seven players to face off against each other. Best of all, *Warcraft II* will



The play interface is similar enough to the original to keep gamers from having to learn a new set of rules



Varying structures give players several new units to build — and destroy

ensure long-term playability by offering a scenario editor which will enable players to build their own battles from ground zero.

In the end, all of the elements that made *Warcraft* great are back, but with a full editor, and rules for air and sea combat, *Warcraft II* has the depth and playability to make it an instant classic. And while nothing is guaranteed in the development stages, this is one game to definitely watch for.



Human forces have been improved with new fighter types and the addition of allies



The new air and sea attack craft forces players to develop new offensive strategies

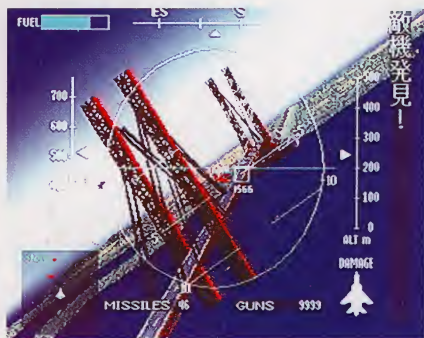


As in the first game, brilliant vocal effects bring the orcs to life



ng alphas

Air Combat



There are two views available in *Air Combat*: behind the aircraft (right) and inside the cockpit (above). The cockpit perspective provides access to extra information such as altitude and fuel levels.



A choice of 16 aircraft (top) will be available. Missions will sort out the men from the boys.

Namco's fifth PlayStation game is already in the pipeline, less than six months after the release of the hardware. *Air Combat* is yet another conversion from the firm's stable of 3D coin-ops. Although it has received a name change in Japan (the Japanese game was known as *Ace Combat*), the US version will change the title. In the arcades, *Air Combat* has recently been superseded by a vastly more sophisticated sequel, *Air Combat 22* (see page 79), which uses an advanced version of the *Ridge Racer* technology called Super System 22.

Like the coin-op, *Air Combat* includes a series of missions (the one playable mission took 20 minutes), but it has been given extra depth, a progressive story line, and less linear gameplay. There are now 16 different aircraft to choose from, a wider selection of ammunition and weapons, and mission briefing and map screens to give the player a strategic overview. Bank turning, locking on targets, and completing intense missions can be all handled beautifully with the Negeon controller (also from Namco).

With another coin-op conversion waiting in the wings, Namco's role in the PlayStation's future is proving crucial

Format:	PlayStation
Publisher:	Namco
Developer:	Namco
Release Date:	Out now (Japan)
Origin:	Japan



The PlayStation game includes a wider variety of landscapes to fly over than its arcade antecedent.



The PlayStation title also boasts smooth, texture-mapped environments rather than the coin-op's barren, flat-shaded polygons. This alone is enough to ensure that *Air Combat* will attract attention when it goes on sale in the US this fall.

ng

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Jumping Flash PlayStation **Worldwide Soccer** Saturn **Slam 'n' Jam '95** 3DO **WWF Raw** Sega 32X **Savage** Neo-Geo **Lost Eden** PC **Syndicate** Mac **Judge Dredd** Genesis **Romance** SNES **Sega Rally** arcade



The complete, multiplatform videogame review section

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PlayStation

Gunner's Heaven

Publisher: Media Vision
Developer: Treasure

Dear Lord, the carnage. Aside from hand cramps sure to come from mashing the fire button for three straight hours, it would be extremely difficult not to enjoy playing *Gunner's Heaven*.

There is absolutely, positively, not one lick of innovative gaming here, and yet it hardly matters. The point is that *Gunner's Heaven* delivers exactly what the title promises, gunning. This is the game that's been attempted on 16-bit machines from the start. The sheer number



In *Gunner's Heaven*, the action is the star; heroes, enemies, and backgrounds are secondary

of sprites (that's right, none of that polygon foolishness here) on the screen at once is enough to make you want to go to a dance club to relax. And fear not, there is absolutely no flicker and/or tear. What's there is there until you blow it out of existence.

It's actually quite hard to go on with this review as the game demands we beat that next boss and, besides, there is really very little else to say about this game. "Shoot everything that moves" has never been such an accurate description of anything.

Rating: ★★★

Power Baseball

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami

There are several PlayStation titles still riding the fence as to whether or not they will be coming to the US. Power Baseball isn't even in the same field that the fence surrounds.

That being said, and understood, it would be unfair to judge this as a traditional

PlayStation

LEAPS AND BOUNDS

Jumping Flash!

Publisher: SCE
Developer: SCE

In these early PlayStation days we will no doubt get a good idea for the heights the machine will stretch. Many of the boundaries have been redefined in a big way with this game. *Jumping Flash!* is just the kind of game that will legitimize a new console in a hurry. From concept to execution, everything here is simply superb.

The game shares its roots with the side-scrolling platform genre, but this is anything but a side-scroller. The deciding difference here is in the first person perspective and the 3D environments in which you, as a mechanical rabbit, must explore amidst the evil powers of such foes as the deadly duck, the mean-as-hell giraffe, and the unfriendly frog. Armed with a unique arsenal of weapons and a super jumping ability (a key feature), your mission is to find the four missing jetpods in each level. It will take all your jumping abilities to negotiate each original level as well as some keen shooting skills to keep yourself from joining the ranks of the, well, dead mech-bunny rabbits.

There is no escaping the cute factor in this game, but never has there been such a fine excuse for cuteness. This game must be played to be truly understood.

Rating: ★★★★★



The enemies may be cute, but they are foes worth fearing; in other words, this ain't no kid's game (left). The level bosses are truly worth fighting your way through in each level. Unique, challenging, weird, these are real next generation bosses (inset)



The visual effect of falling toward the ground (those white blocks are your boots) is simply stunning as the details gracefully fade in

Once again it's time to check out the shelves for the best and worst games currently available. This month's section takes a look at the titles attainable for Saturn's surprise launch, as well as three new games for the PlayStation, one of which sets new standards for videogaming. Below is a chart to help you figure out just how much we like a game.

★★★★★ **Revolutionary**
Brilliantly conceived and flawlessly executed; a new high-water mark.

★★★★ **Excellent**
A high-quality and inventive new game. Either a step forward for an existing genre, or a successful attempt at creating a new one.

★★★ **Good**
A solid and competitive example of an established game style.

★★ **Average**
Perhaps competent; certainly uninspired.

★ **Bad**
Crucially flawed in design or application.

Saturn

HEADS UP

Worldwide Soccer

Publisher: Sega
Developer: InVision Interactive

The Sega Sports line has never been considered an enormous success story when compared in the same arena with developers such as Electronic Arts, but the Saturn's *Worldwide Soccer* is, at least, a step in the right direction.

There is little here to make you stand up and cheer, but by the same token there is absolutely nothing in this game that is completely wrong, either. Somehow still, the game is missing that spark that would put it over the top. The graphics are good, but not spectacular. The music is fun, but not exactly inspired, and the gameplay is solid but a little bit sluggish.

The highlight of *Worldwide Soccer* is the ability to change the camera angle on the fly. Unfortunately, there are drawbacks here, too. There are a total of three different angles ranging from a distant overhead view to an near eye-level view. The problem is that there seems to still be one missing somewhere between the distant view and the medium view. Another problem: either player can change the view at any point in the game which becomes an unpredictable nuisance for your opponent.

In the early development days of the Saturn there will surely be some near misses in game design. *Worldwide Soccer* is a fairly good near miss, but a near miss nonetheless.

Rating: ★★★



The distant view provides the best opportunity to set up intricate passing plays (top). The close-up view is great for tracking a specific player, but not much help when it comes time to pass (inset).



Your ability to rotate the screen, on top of being able to zoom in and out, adds great versatility to the way in which the game plays



Myst's look is every bit as crisp and detailed as the original — which is definitely a good start since this game depends so strongly on its looks

American baseball game. So, the question is whether or not this is a good Japanese baseball game, and we don't see how it could be.

Perhaps the game's most serious flaw is that there no game element really taking advantage of the PlayStation's full potential.

This game could not only have been done on a 16-bit machine, but it could have been done better. The graphic display is thoroughly unimpressive with its singular viewpoint and lack of any kind of celebratory graphics in the case of say, a home run. The music is, again, ultra simplistic and repetitive, to the point of being annoying. The gameplay is no better than average and somehow manages to match the graphics in nonrealism. Play ball, but play it with another game.

Rating: ★



Large-headed players in Power Baseball don't quite translate

Saturn

Myst

Publisher: SunSoft
Developer: Cyan

Next Generation has already voiced its somewhat controversial opinion of *Myst* for another system (NG 6), and the points made about senselessly tedious puzzle solving hold true for the Saturn version just

as it will for all other versions planned for the near future.

The question here is in the translation from the original game which managed to turn the world of multimedia on its ear. With the still-frame graphics and simplistic play controls, there is no reason the Saturn should not be able to handle a fully realized translation, and fortunately, it is flawless. The graphics have maintained every bit of their intended beauty and the controls are wonderfully easy to master. Perhaps the aspect of gameplay easiest to applaud is the overall speed of changes from one graphic frame to the next. In a CD-ROM industry already well beyond still-frame graphics, it is very nice, at least, to be able to sail through these stills with lightning-fast speed.

Rating: ★★★

Pebble Beach Golf Links

Publisher: Sega
Developer: Sega Sports

Pebble Beach Golf Links is a good golf game. There are no great stretches in gameplay, looks, or strategy, but everything you need is here and if you like golf games, you will probably like this one.

As opposed to the many 16-bit console golf games PBGL is more like a PC game which could probably be taken as a sign of things to come from the Saturn and other next generation machines. The FMV instruction, filler, and general guidance from pro golfer Craig Stadler feel quite natural among the realistic graphics of the course, as do the digitized golfers. The options for gameplay are on the impressive side of varied, including a practice game, skins game, stroke play, tournament play, and match play. The game also offers the option for up to six players to play at once.

rating 3DO

This game is definitely meant to show the power of the Saturn and to a certain degree it does, but probably the title is no more than a sign of more impressive things to come.

Rating: ★★★



The digitized figures in *PBGL* look somewhat natural against the game's other sharp graphics

Tama

Publisher: Time Warner Interactive (Japan)
Developer: Tengen

The concept comes from a toy that has been shoved in kids' pockets, brought along on road trips, and pulled out of secret hiding places in the back of classrooms all over the world. The question is whether this great little novelty toy, which places a small ball in an enclosed maze, with the object being to tilt the table back and forth until the ball rolls into a specified hole, makes a good videogame.

Though every aspect of this game is well executed, the final answer is that *Tama* is a failed concept from the beginning. The first few levels are fun just to see the table rotating, tilting, and scaling which it does fabulously. After the novelty wears off, however, there really just isn't



The table and ball both move very nicely in *Tama*, but in the end even good control or impressive graphics just aren't enough to save this one

very much fun to be had. On one hand, it's encouraging to see the Saturn handling the demands of this game as nicely as it does, but in the end its power would be better applied elsewhere.

Rating: ★★★

3DO

Hell: A Cyberpunk Thriller

Publisher: GameTek
Developer: Take 2 Interactive

This is a graphic adventure, ported over from the PC CD-ROM version. The setting is Washington DC, 2094; the gates of hell have been open for almost 30 years now, and to top that off, it seems the government is trying to kill you (no conspiracy theory here, oh no). To figure out why, you've got to battle with and handle an assortment of hackers, terrorists, demons, not to mention taking the odd trip to hell itself. If this sounds interesting, it should be, but the game never quite lives up to the premise.

The overall design is cool, even if it's fourth generation *Blade Runner*, and the voice actors, boasting stars like Grace Jones, Geoffrey Holder, and Dennis Hopper, are better than most.

However, the pace is sluggish, and the rendered animation has a bad habit of looping itself every two seconds while the characters talk — and talk and talk. Like *The Daedalus Encounter* and a number of other recent games, a lot of time is spent just watching, and if that sounds dull, well, it is.

Rating: ★★

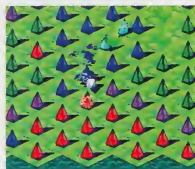


The rendered graphics look fine, but the repetitive animation and overly talky gameplay make *Hell: A Cyberpunk Thriller* as slow as molasses

Icebreaker

Publisher: Magnet Interactive
Developer: Magnet Interactive Studios

This one's kind of weird. It's an action puzzle game in which you,



In *Icebreaker*, you're a pyramid who's out to destroy other pyramids, see. Pretty obscure?

a pyramid on your side who can shoot fireballs, attempt to clear a field of obstacles composed of upright pyramids of different colors. There are a variety of methods to clear them depending on the color, from simply running into them (blue pyramids), to shooting them (red pyramids), to maneuvering other mobile "hunter" pyramids (the yellow ones), into smashing them (the green pyramids) for you.

If *Icebreaker* sounds a little obscure, you're right, it is. In a nutshell, the control could be smoother, and the '70s retro-soul soundtrack doesn't do anything for it. But even though the gameplay quickly gets repetitive, once you get the hang of it, it's sort of compulsive in an odd way, and still worth a look.

Rating: ★★

Trip'D

Publisher: Warp
Developer: Warp

This is an action/puzzle game, which is very similar to both *Dr. Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine* (of Sonic fame) or *Kirby's Avalanche* for Genesis and SNES respectively — but what this really adds up to is that it's *Puyo-Puyo* time again.

This version adds a few new wrinkles — instead of groups of two beans or whatever falling into the well, you get groups of three, which you can rotate and re-orient. Also, when identical tokens line up in a two-by-two square, they turn into a little monster instead of disappearing. By making another line of the same marker disappear, the monster disappears as well, which has different effects on your opponent's well, depending on the type of monster it was.

All of these variables, however, really only serve to complicate a wonderfully simple game, and make it more frustrating than innovative.

Rating: ★★



Trip'D is essentially *Puyo-Puyo* in 24-bit color with monsters, but is no better than the original game

rating 32X neo-geo

3DO

SHATTERING

Slam 'n' Jam '95

Publisher: Crystal Dynamics
Developer: Crystal Dynamics

While this game borrows heavily — let's just say it outright steals — much of its game mechanics from Konami's arcade hoop-smash *Run 'n' Gun*, that doesn't stop it from coming in a close second to *FIFA Soccer* as the most enjoyable sports game for 3DO, or in fact, for any system.

The players are huge, prone to just the kind of grandstand dunks the best real-life players are known. Control is smooth, and the animation is simply excellent. The only disappointments are the lack of an NBA license, and that the down-the-court perspective sometimes leaves you wondering just what's going on at the near end of the court. Also, once you get the hang of dropping three-pointers, it's ridiculously easy to do so. However, these are minor quibbles.

The pace is lightning fast, and when you hear the roar of the crowd, it's bound to give you chills. If you have any interest in the sport at all and own a 3DO, this is a must-have.

Rating: ★★★★★

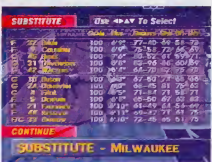


Slam 'n' Jam '95 features the biggest characters and smoothest gameplay of any basketball game for any home system



And when you slam that dunk, man, can your players carry on

Recognize any of these names? Of course not. One of the game's only disappointments is the lack of an NBA license



32X

NBA Jam Tournament Edition

Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Iguana

Let's give Acclaim its due, it's going to squeeze every single penny out of *NBA Jam* that it can. First came the huge hit *NBA Jam*, then *NBA Jam Tournament Edition* for the SNES and Genesis, and now



Big heads, scaling players, high-flying dunks. If that's your cup of tea, then you'll like *NBA Jam T.E.*

the 32X version has arrived.

One of the many unchanged elements throughout the various configurations of *NBA Jam* is its gameplay, which is the same as the original, and damn fun. Flying through the rafters, burning basketballs, and showing matches aren't things you're going to see in an NBA game (except the Knicks), but are things *Jam* fans have come to expect. The 32X version boasts of scaling players, updated rosters, and the big digitized heads of the arcade. But none of these minuscule additions do much to improve on the original.

NBA Jam T.E. is a good game, but it is just as good on the Genesis and SNES, and shows no signs of 32-bit gaming. While there have been some decent games for the 32X, this is yet one more of the many disappointments.

Rating: ★★

WWF Raw

Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Sculptured Software

Another Acclaim port-over to the 32X is sure to make 32X owners wonder why they needed that funky add-on at all.

The 32X version features the same 12 wrestlers, same moves, and even the same mega moves. Except this time the mega moves are printed right in the manual, which takes away one of the few exciting facets of the original.

What's the 32-bit improvement? The wrestler pictures are sharper, the sound is better, and the actual game



You bought a 32X to upgrade your Genesis games. Does *WWF Raw* show upgraded quality?

screens have minuscule graphic improvements. What this does is make the 32X version equivalent to the SNES, hardly a noteworthy feat for a 32-bit machine.

The actual gameplay is the identical to the button-mash fest as the SNES/Genesis versions. You're constantly required to hit as many buttons as fast as you can. All this does is give you hand cramps and blisters, and if that sounds like a good time you need some kind of social life.

Rating: ★★

Neo-Geo

Double Dragon

Publisher: Neo-Geo
Developer: SNK

Of all the 2D fighters coming out from Neo-Geo, this is perhaps the least impressive of them. Without an ounce of innovation, even on the "well-that's-kind-of-neat" level, *Double Dragon* is tired, very tired. There are not any specifically notable aspects of this game, but then again, there is actually very little to complain about beyond the fact that the fighter *Double Dragon* has already been done several times over.

The template from which this one came should certainly be retired, but in the mean time *Double Dragon* is another in a long line of mediocre fighters for all those fighter junkies who somehow have made room in their heads for 50 different sets of super moves. You could do better.

Rating: ★

Fatal Fury 3

Publisher: Neo-Geo
Developer: SNK

There is not much to say about *Fatal Fury 3* that probably hasn't already been said about *Fatal Fury 1* and 2, but at least there's nothing disappointing to report either. With a somewhat varied crowd of fighters to choose from, each with an individualized list of moves at their disposal, *Fatal Fury 3* delivers exactly what you would expect from it.

rating pc

The one truly notable feature about the game is the minimal but effective use of 3D escapes. The players are all able, even if just for a few seconds, to slip out of the line of fire either to avoid enemy attack or to set up for an offensive move. Beyond this feature the game is standard fare.

Rating: ★★

Savage Reign

Publisher: Neo-Geo
Developer: SNK

The genre of the 2D fighting games seems to be closing in on its innovative capacity. The formula is as follows: two fighters hosting completely unbelievable martial arts moves stare each other down in some exotic location that extends only far enough to get off that one special running move. *Savage Reign*, unfortunately, fits quite nicely into this stereotype.



In *Savage Reign*, the Joker is both a nontraditional character and an effective battler

The moves are fun and not overly difficult to pull off, but the old tactics of catching someone in the corner and letting them have it with the low kicks still works too well. The only innovative facet in *Savage Reign* is the upper level perch that shows up in each location in the form of a loft, rooftop, or just a cable to hang by. If you just can't get enough of these games, here's another.

Rating: ★★

The Next Glory, Super Side Kicks Three

Publisher: Neo-Geo
Developer: SNK

There are some nice ideas in the latest Neo-Geo soccer efforts, but the gameplay lacks any real excitement to accompany them. Some innovative touches, such as the "chance" window, which enables your player to score a shot of glory when the conditions are just right, the injury loss, or the power feature, do make the game interesting the first couple of times. But these features can't hold your attention long enough to forget the rest of the game, which is average at best execution.

The graphics, especially the players, look good and the action is reasonably quick, but there is definitely something missing by way of cohesive team play. It is too common to see a player on your team standing by while your opponent blazes by waiting for someone to challenge him.

Obviously the fun is in controlling one player over all the rest, but it's nice for your teammates to at least get themselves into position. If there were no other soccer games out there, this one would probably be considered great, but...

Rating: ★★



Blood Bowl

Publisher: MicroLeague
Developer: Subway Software

And now for something completely different: A football game set in the far-future fantasy world of the Game Workshop's "Warhammer" role-playing system.

In this tongue-in-cheek blood-sport, teams made up of Orcs, Elves, Undead, and others go it at on a gridiron made of grass, ice, or astrogranite. But despite its sports-sim trappings, this isn't an action game. Play is turn-based, as in *X-COM* or *Jagged Alliance*, so strategy counts for more than reflexes. *Blood Bowl* is an interesting mix of unusual elements, and it works quite well.

The game loses one star for promising modern play it doesn't deliver (the publisher says this feature will be added in a later patch), but it's just what the doctor ordered for the sports or strategy gamer looking for something really different.

Rating: ★★

The Daedalus Encounter

Publisher: Virgin Interactive
Developer: Mechadeus

The Daedalus Encounter, from the creators of Mediavision's *Critical Path*, is everything that earlier game should have been — and a whole lot more.

Yes, it's another Windows-based game with lots of QuickTime video sequences. But this time around, there's an actual story and some genuine interaction. *The Daedalus Encounter* casts you in the role of a disembodied brain, salvaged by your old war buddies and placed in a high-tech probe so you can join them in their space salvage business. Naturally, you and your friends (played by Tia Carrere, of *Wayne's World* fame, and Christian Bocher) waste no time



Tia Carrere and Christian Bocher play your accident-prone comrades in *The Daedalus Encounter* — an "interactive movie" actually worth playing

finding themselves stranded on a mysterious starship hurtling toward an alien sun, and it's largely up to you to save everybody's bacon.

The Daedalus Encounter comes much closer to being an actual adventure game than most of the multiple-CD video extravaganzas on the market. Don't let the "interactive movie" hype throw you; *The Daedalus Encounter* is a keeper.

Rating: ★★

Jewels of the Oracle

Publisher: Disel Entertainment
Developer: Elot Productions

Jewels of the Oracle is being touted as the next *Myst*, but it's really just a mess. Sure, the graphics are pretty, sometimes beautiful, but where's the game?

The title challenges you to "Explore the secrets of an Ancient World," but it's no adventure. Like *The 7th Guest*, *Jewels* is a series of basically unrelated challenges that will look familiar to any puzzle fan, dressed up with nice visuals and hung together on the barest skeleton frame of a plot. Almost all of the puzzles in the game are accessible from the start, so there's no real exploring to do.



It's *The 7th Guest* all over again; abstract puzzles done in attractive graphics

If you are just crazy about abstract puzzles, *Jewels of the Oracle* is right up your alley, otherwise, just keep shopping.

Rating: ★

The Pure Wargame, Vol. 1: Death From Above

Publisher: QQP
Developer: QQP

Only hard-core wargamers need apply for this one — there's a reason they call it *The Pure Wargame*. This first installment in QQP's series of painstakingly detailed war games finally shows what the publisher of great titles like *The Perfect General* and *The Lost Admiral* can do when they get serious about historical accuracy. *Death From Above* centers on some of the great airborne assaults of World War II, and the game does an excellent job of simulating every detail of real-world warfare.

That doesn't mean the interface is complicated, though. Even war gaming newbies should be able to get into *Death From Above* with no trouble. There's some question, however, about whether or not they'll want to. For someone unfamiliar with the wargaming experience, this one can be overwhelming.

Rating: ★★

1830: Railroads and Robber Barons

Publisher: Avalon Hill
Developer: SimTex Software

Yes, it's an empire-building simulation set in the early days of railroads — but it's not even remotely like MicroProse's excellent *Railroad Tycoon*: 1830 is a translation of the Avalon Hill boardgame, and its origins show.

PC

PARADISE FOUND

Lost Eden

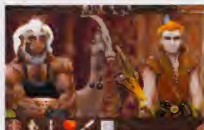
Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment
Developer: Cryo

This one earns one of its stars just for having an original concept in the cliché-ridden world of graphic adventures. You won't find any futuristic space stations or dark-age castles in *Lost Eden*; it takes place in a mythical past where humans coexisted with intelligent dinosaurs. There's a lot of potential for innovation here, but it's not entirely fulfilled.

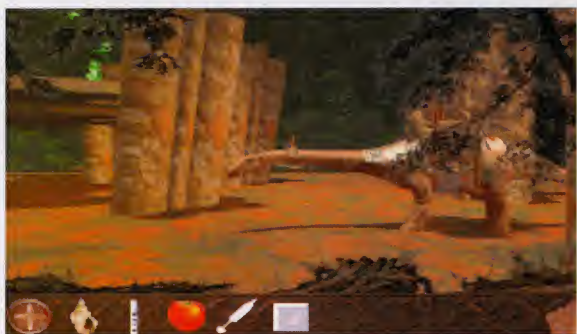
Despite its original setting and characters, *Lost Eden* falls back on more than a few time-worn adventure-game conventions: There's a daring prince out to reclaim his birthright; a wise old wizard; and a lengthy series of interlocking mini-quests designed to stretch the game between major plot points.

But what *Lost Eden* lacks in follow-through, it more than makes up for in production values. Its graphics are simply amazing; this is no *Jurassic Park*, but *Lost Eden*'s computer-animated dinos are beautifully convincing. Sound is good, too, with adequate voice-acting and stirring, unusual music. All in all, it's a solid adventure game with some very nice trimmings.

Rating: ★★★★★



As the story unfolds, a host of strange heroes joins your party



Lost Eden's excellent animated sequences convey a real sense of the dinosaurs' grace and beauty

That's both good news and bad: This title has more strategic and economic depth than *Railroad Tycoon*, but it also lacks a lot of the depth a good computer game can have. SimTex created a faithful rendition of the classic board game, but it stopped right there. The result is a simulation that feels two-dimensional, at least in comparison to what PC gamers have come to expect.

Rating: ★★

SuperKarts

Publisher: Williams Entertainment Inc.
Developer: Manic Media

God only knows why there's been a recent flood of novelty kart-

racing games on the PC, but there's no question which one is the best. *SuperKarts*, with its ultra-smooth animation and breakneck action, tops them all. *SuperKarts* drops you into the cramped seat of a souped-up go-kart and challenges you to lead the pack on 16 tracks around the world. The obstacle-strewn courses are rendered in texture-mapped 3D, but the detail doesn't slow things down. On a reasonably fast 486, *SuperKarts* is as smooth as silk, even with all the graphic options maxed out.

More importantly, though, this game is just plain fun. With the option to customize your kart over a full, 32-race season,

SuperKarts offers a perfect blend of strategy and arcade action. To top it all off, there's a split-screen option for two players and a network option that lets as many as eight gamers get in on the fun.

Rating: ★★★★★

Tank Commander

Publisher: Domark Software Inc.
Developer: Big Red Software

Tank Commander tries to strike a balance between simulation-style detail and arcade-style simplicity — but like most games that want to be all things to all people, it ends up failing in both areas.

True, the game has excellent graphics and a few innovations, like modem and network play, and

a very impressive recon-chopper view. But the title is also marked by a distinct lack of realism and an interface that conveys a rough, unfinished feel.

Outside of the game's nice visuals, *Tank Commander* is nowhere near as good as MicroProse's *M1 Tank Platoon*, a much earlier tank sim that remains the market's best.

Rating: ★★

Cannon Fodder

Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment

Developer: Sensible Software

This is either the cutest wargame ever, or the fastest-paced strategy game ever. Actually, it's both. In *Cannon Fodder*, you control a squad of soldiers who all look like a cross between General Patton and the hordes of fuzzy little Lemmings which everyone went completely nuts over a few years back.

Your troops in *Cannon Fodder* are simple enough: you must infiltrate enemy territory, kill their soldiers, and destroy their facilities, all in realtime with an arcade-style point-and-shoot interface. But this is not your usual twitch game; you'll have to use some strategy to win. Or should you split your squad and outflank the enemy? Who gets the grenades and bazookas, and when should you use them? Your soldiers (those who survive, at least) improve in skills with every successful mission — but you'll still need your wits to win.

The cute little characters aren't the only quality that *Cannon Fodder* has in common with the infamous *Lemmings* series; it's also oh-so-dangerously addictive. This *sui generis* froth of strategy and action swings the needle on the old "Just-One-More-Game" meter just a little higher.

Rating: ★★★★★

Macintosh

Load Runner: The Legend Returns

Publisher: Sierra
Developer: Presage

Yee! Yee! The brilliant, simple and addictive classic Macintosh game has returned, and there isn't one aspect of it that isn't better than the original one.

With its new 256-color facelift (grays for older PowerBooks) in the vein of *Indiana Jones*, *Load Runner* is still running players ragged through dozens of levels as they search for treasure, elude pursuers, figure out tricky evasion schemes,

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Lode Runner's mad monks are just as relentless and stupid as ever—but boy, there sure are a lot of them. Notice the upgrades in look and detail

and blast trap-holes in every available surface; but now players can use all the special goodies they dreamed about in the original game: nooks to hide in when totally surrounded, jackhammers to smash through laser-resistant rock, pails of disgusting muck to slow down the bad guys, or simple bombs to blow them (temporarily) to Kingdom Come.

The sprite animation is terrific (without that old videogame gaffe of making the sprites fat and goofy), the sounds are great, and you can even import most of your old *Lode Runner* levels. This thing kicks butt. Internal arguments have prevented us from rating this game with five stars.

Rating: ★★★★★

Syndicate

**Publisher: EA
Developer: Bullfrog**

Syndicate takes a while to get into, make no mistake about that. There's a learning curve here before the game is any good, but once past it, players who enjoy being the Greedy, Amoral, Corporate Bastard are in for a satisfying depraved chunk of murder. As the aforementioned GACB, you pick the logo, color, style, and cybernetic hit teams of an international megacorp with a lust for nations and the firepower to back it up.

Player-customized mission teams — outfitted with weapons, cybernetic enhancements, and purchased information that cyberpunk assures us is the power — conduct infiltrations, assassinations, thefts, and wholesale massacres on detailed 3/4 perspective battlegrounds. Down-to-it gamers of the *Doom* and *Marathon* ilk may be a little put off by the order-based movement system (agents moving to preselected locations, relying on preprogrammed levels of smarts/adrenaline, or direct player intervention), but that type

of gamer probably isn't enough of a control freak to cut it in this dog-eat-dog corporation, and will likely be wasted by an aspiring underling very soon.

Rating: ★★

Theme Park

**Publisher: EA
Developer: Bullfrog**

Play *Theme Park* once or twice and you'll think about it repeatedly the next time you're at Disneyland (you'll wonder what drugs were responsible for the intro sequence, and where you can get some).

Not a game for the action-oriented or easily frustrated, *Theme Park* puts you in charge — *Sim-City* style — of every last niggly, pain-in-the-butt aspect of running a modern amusement park. Laying out the ice cream shops and spooky trees around your haunted house may sound like lots of giggles, but you'll pay your dues soon enough when you have to deal with rain squalls; decide which shakes/snacks/toadburgers to serve; hire more guards to handle park-going thugs; and listen to patrons bitch about how there are too few bathrooms.

As if this isn't enough, you must fiercely expand your empire to new nations and more expensive, temperate regions (your cheapest and initial building site is in England, behind which you can almost smell some smirking Bullfrog designer). Now put out that damn merry-go-round.

Rating: ★★



You've built Theme Park's Happiest Place on Earth; now will you please install some toilets?

Genesis

The Adventures Of Batman & Robin

**Publisher: Sega
Developer: Clockwork Tortoise Inc.**

Last we checked in with the dynamic duo, the game wasn't complete and we fully sank our teeth into what we thought was a finished product. This time it's complete, and sad to say not much has changed.

Sega bought the license to the animated TV show, then went on to make a generic side-scroller that does nothing to remind you of the TV show. Oh, unless you saw that episode where Batman ran frantically from left to right tossing thousands of bat-a-rangs at clowns.

Confronting bosses like Mr. Freeze, The Joker, and Mad Hatter could've been done with much more originality, and all the levels lack substance. Playing as the dynamic duo in the two-player mode, a decent techno soundtrack, and solid, but choppy graphics keep this game from being absolutely awful. But in the end, it is the repetitive gameplay and total lack of originality that continues to keep *Batman and Robin* down, a second time.

Rating: ★

Comix Zone

**Publisher: Sega
Developer: Sega Technical Institute**

This is a different approach to the side-scroller that puts the player into a living comic book. You are stuck in the pages of your own comic book and bad guys are being drawn in as you move frame to frame. Some awesome visuals, a solid soundtrack, and the extremely unique idea make *Comix Zone* an interesting game.



Choosing the frame to jump into helps make Comix Zone a notch above other Final Fight clones

But beyond all the glitz is the gameplay, which is the same as *Final Fight* and any one of its many clones. All you do is continually press the attack button till your character pulls off

a combo of moves and finishes off the opponent, then you do it again, and again...

A very cool idea for a game that wasn't executed properly. *Comix Zone* is better than most.

Rating: ★★★

Deep Space Nine

**Publisher: Playmates
Developer: Novotrade**

Deep Space Nine's slow-paced side-scroller attempt at a game is sure to bring a tear to any gamer's eyes. And the running and jumping antics of Commander Sisco are sure to do the same to any fan of the television show.

The graphics are well done, and the sound effects are decent — especially the phasers — but the gameplay is just not there. In these search and destroy missions, you must identify the crises by talking to other shipmates, find a way to them (aliens, catastrophes, etc.), and take care of them to advance.

So once again, a game attempts to straddle the line between action and strategy and ends up doing neither very well. This game is boring and will only be of minor interest to *Deep Space Nine* freaks.

Rating: ★

Hardball '95

**Publisher: Sport Accolade
Developer: Accolade**

The *Hardball* series started on the PC as the first best-selling baseball title. The problem is that *Hardball '95* hasn't added enough to the original to keep up with the rest of the baseball games.

Until you take the field, this game looks great, with the players' license, full stats, and all the options. However, once on the field, the graphics are pitiful, the animation is slow, and the gameplay is just plain poor. The pitcher and catcher are well captured with smooth animation, but the timing... as in previous *Hardball* games, is way off. To make things worse, the players are racially incorrect: Wade Boggs is a medium-sized white guy; Frank Thomas, an African-American, appears as a medium-sized white guy; Rafael Palmeiro, a Latino, is a medium-sized... you get the idea.

Sim fanatics will love the stats, but the poor gameplay quickly removes any ideas of playing out a whole season.

Rating: ★★

Justice League Task Force

**Publisher: Acclaim/Sunsoft
Developer: Concorde**

Four years ago, *Justice League* would've set the gaming world

rating genesis

Sega Genesis

DREADED

Judge Dredd

Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Probe

Generic side-scroller (Merriam Webster's Tenth Edition): when a company (like Acclaim) purchases a movie or cartoon license (like *StarGate*, *Warlock*, *Batman Forever*, *Spider-Man*, *True Lies*) and turns it into a simplistic action hero game in which he runs, jumps, hits, or kicks bland enemies in a sideways motion.

Yes, Acclaim has done it again. However, with *Judge Dredd* it's actually done a few things right. While the object is still to run from left to right and to kill (or arrest) everything, this time around you have mission objectives like locking down prison doors in the midst of a riot. Mission objectives combined with the tough enemies and some maze-like exploration, are the ingredients which keep *Dredd* from being another generic title.

The graphics are nice looking and the sound is as crisp as you'll find on a side-scroller, but in the end *Judge Dredd* is guilty of one thing, it's yet another side-scroller.

Rating: ★★★

The rain level — what a technological breakthrough that is! We've only seen that in every other side-scroller out this year



At first glance *Dredd* looks like every other side-scroller on the market, at second glance there is no change (inset). You can either arrest the bad guys or empty your gun in their chest and call it self-defense (above)



What's Aquaman gonna do against Superman in *JL77*? Summon fish?

ablaze with its superhero fighting game. However, the sprite-based

2D fighter is a stagnant genre, and *Justice League* is such a generic effort, you may forget which fighting game you're in.

As *The Flash*, *Superman*, *Batman*, *Aquaman*, *Green Arrow*, *Wonder Woman*, *Cheetah*, *Despero*, or *Darkseid*, you are able to pull off special moves that are in-line with each character's comic book powers. This could make for some good fights — unfortunately, it doesn't. None of the strengths and weaknesses of each character are exploited the way they could've been.

Squint your eyes and you

could swear you're playing any of the other many fighting games, that doesn't mean *Justice League* is awful, it's just real normal.

Rating: ★★

Triple Play Baseball

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Extended Play Productions

The one major sport EA has yet to conquer is baseball. With *Triple Play*, the company hopes to change all that.



Triple Play Baseball could've used a better pitcher interface and would've made this game king

Triple Play features some solid graphics and very smooth animation along with the EA usuals of player license and a good feel for the game. A choice of views, either the enlarged World Series Baseball view or the normal view give you a choice of how you want to play. The stats flash on screen just like an ESPN broadcast, and little things, like a player dusting off his uniform, are captured perfectly. Trading

players, season mode, and stats galore make this a good simulation cart. Everything in this game seems to be well thought out, except one area, the pitching. You don't get enough control of the pitches to even care what pitch you're throwing.

Other than that, *Triple Play* is a solid baseball effort, and it ranks right up there with Sega's *World Series '95*.

Rating: ★★★

Wayne Gretzky And The NHLPA All-Stars

Publisher: Time Warner Interactive
Developer: Time Warner Interactive

This is yet another entry into the crowded rink of hockey games. Time Warner knew it couldn't compete with EA's *NHL '95*, so it took a different angle. *Wayne Gretzky* is a high-scoring *NBA Jam*-type hockey game that is different than anything before it.

The game features the players license, simulation, and an arcade mode, but no matter which mode you choose, the action is anything but simulation. There's even an option to just pick up and play, which is what *Wayne Gretzky* is all about. That, plus the simple controls, make this game easy to get into, but in the long run it's just too simple.

This is an essentially different type of hockey game perfect for the younger gamer, but anyone looking for depth and simulation is advised to pass on this arcade-style effort.

Rating: ★★★



Not the prettiest hockey game nor the most in-depth. However, *Wayne Gretzky and the NHLPA All-Stars* is very easy to pick up and play

SNES

International Super Star Soccer

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami

It's surprising how many soccer games have become so popular, and while this one doesn't add much to the sub-genre, or put a dent in such high-end efforts as Sega's *Worldwide Soccer* for Saturn, or especially *FIFA* for 3DO, it works quite well considering its 16-bit origins.

The game is fast paced and well animated. The only flaw is the side-on field perspective, which stays too close to the action and sometimes makes it rough to

get a feel for where all your players are. Instead, it resorts to a clunky radar display at the bottom of the screen to keep track. In the end, however, the simple controls and plethora of season options outweigh the minor annoyances.

Rating: ★★★



Super Star Soccer makes up in play mechanics what it lacks in flash and style

Judge Dredd

Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Probe

Acclaim gets a little credit for not being content to base this game exclusively on the movie. Instead, only the first seven levels follow the film, and the last five are based on the *Dredd* comic book series. However, whether he's shooting down — or "judging" — movie or comic book villains, the game doesn't vary much. True, this isn't exactly your standard side-scroller — each level is a big maze, in which you have to find the hidden contraband, and then the exit. There's also a level in which *Dredd* flies his combat cycle around while his tail gunner shoots at pursuers, similar to *Stargate*, another Acclaim side-scroller featuring

SNES

ANCIENT

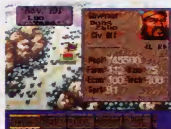
Romance of the Three Kingdoms IV

Publisher: Koei
Developer: Koei

The strategy masters at Koei are at it again, taking you back once more into third century China. This is resource management and tactical strategy at its most hard-core, and if you've played any of the other three installments, you know exactly what you're in for — which is both a promise and a threat.

This style of game deserves every devotee it has, but the form hasn't changed much since *Nobunaga's Ambition I*. Aside from the tremendously gorgeous graphics and sound, the only real additions to this chapter just make the game even more complex — there are perhaps a dozen new command options, plus some 450 special officers for you to try to enlist, and they've added 24 skills in which each officer can become proficient. It's beautiful, it's deep, and it's absorbing, but it's also just a lot more of the same thing.

Rating: ★★★



It's still good, but, *Romance* still looks and plays much like any other game in the series, and it's starting to get a little old



One element you can say for every series that Koei has ever created is that the look of the games continues to improve. The graphics are a real standout in *Romance*

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rating nes



If guiding a fascist hero through mazes is your idea of fun, then pick up *Judge Dredd*

the odd flying level.

Nonetheless, while it's well animated and tightly designed, that still doesn't make *Judge Dredd* very interesting.

Rating: ★★

Kyle Petty's No Fear Racing

Publisher: Williams
Developer: Williams

Oh, go ahead and be afraid, be very, very afraid.

On the surface, this has a lot going for it. The graphics are impressive, with cars that spin out and tumble. It comes with 28

tracks, plus a track editor for creating your own, and it features both single race and season play, with the usual ways to modify your car between races. The game also benefits in no small way from

its screaming soundtrack and an overly enthusiastic announcer.

Ah, but once you start racing, yeah, that's when you quickly discover that every track is almost exactly the same, and



Hope you like the look of this track, because every single one on the circuit in *Kyle Petty's No Fear Racing* looks and drives exactly the same

by stocking up on nitro boosts, you can easily beat every single one. After about three races, this game is old fast. A more truthful title would have been *Kyle Petty's No Variety Racing*.

Rating: ★★

Sterling Sharpe: End 2 End

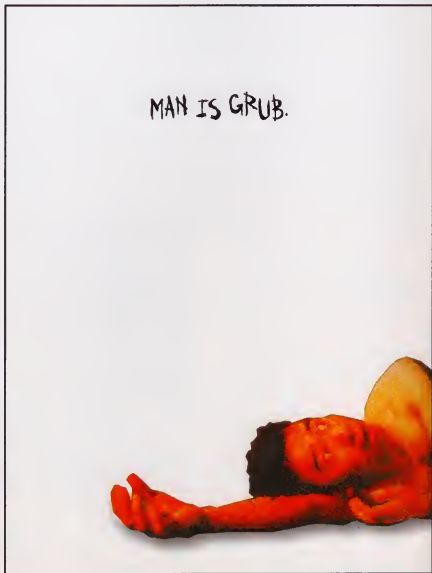
Publisher: Jaleco
Developer: Jaleco

This is by-the-numbers game design at its very worst. It takes a slice of *John Madden Football*, a touch of *NFL '95*, and a dash of *Troy Aikman Football*, then stirs them into a mess you can easily recognize, quickly start to play, then throw in disgust.

The controls are intuitive, but ball handling, and especially defensive ball handling, is the pits. It's just little things, like there's literally no way to for a cornerback to tackle a receiver from behind once he's caught the ball. While the cart includes expansion clubs like Jacksonville and Charlotte for a total of 30 teams, there's no option for

EARTH IS URTH.

MAN IS GRUB.





Sterling Sharpe: End 2 End offers nothing new, and little that's good, for videogame football

season play whatsoever. What kind of fun is that?

Rating: ★

Super Bases Loaded 3: License to Steal

Publisher: Jaleco
Developer: Jaleco

The original *Bases Loaded* for the 8-bit NES, and even *Super Bases Loaded 1* for 16-bit SNES were the premier baseball series of their generation. But it's clear with this latest installment that the series is beginning to creak under its own weight.

This effort adds very little

improvement, and is hampered in no small way by the baseball strike-induced lack of 1994 stats — only the complete 1993 stats are given for each player. While pitching and hitting are well handled, if in a standard way, fielding is just plain annoying, since you have to cycle through

players, rather than simply being able to snap to whomever is closest to the ball.

This is supposed to be the last SNES entry in the series, with the next one due out on PlayStation — let's hope they take it somewhere new.

Rating: ★★



It looks the same, but it plays worse. *Super Bases Loaded 3* shows why the series needs an overhaul, fast

Arcade

Air Combat 22

Publisher: Namco
Developer: Namco

With its Super System 22 board strapped in, giving a boost in speed, graphics, and textured polygons, *Air Combat 22* is more than just an upgrade.

By manipulating joystick and throttle, you navigate through four modes (cadet, cadet/tutorial, Top Gun, and Dog Fight — the latter for experts), blowing up enemy craft, refueling in a bonus stage, and gathering points in limited time, but you won't feel a realistic sense of three dimensions.

You still get more bang for your buck with three viewpoints, killer dogfights, good sound and graphics, but if this upgrade had made the extra step — networking games for head-to-head play — its arrival into the next generation would've been outstanding. As it is, *Air Combat 22* is just a good facelift.

Rating: ★★★

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Arcade



Control is different in this smooth polygon offroad racer, and it takes some getting used to, especially if you're expecting *Sega Rally Championship* to be the next *Daytona USA*

ROAD TRIP

Sega Rally Championship

Publisher: Sega

Developer: Sega

Instead of going head-to-head in the attempt to better its popular stock car racer, *Daytona USA*, AM3, Sega's new arcade division, created a realistic racer just off the beaten track. *Sega Rally Championship* takes the most exhilarating elements of *Daytona* — powerslides, speed, and competitive AI — and drops them into a worldwide dirt-road racing game sure to bring back memories of *Outrun*'s open race course.

While providing driver's-seat and behind-the-car viewpoints (unlike *Daytona*'s four), *Sega Rally* enables dirt-car drivers to test their offroad abilities as they burn through three modes on long, bumpy (air-catching) stretches, back-to-back, side-winding power turns, and constantly alternating paved and unpaved roads. There's a Practice mode and the Grand Prix mode which contains four graduating tracks, Desert (beginners), Forest (intermediate), Mountain (expert), and by taking first place in the final mode, you'll race at Lakeside, a bonus fourth level. Grand Prix is by far the more challenging as you vie against 15 other racers, or if linked up, up to four live opponents.

Hard-core racers will probably like the European and African landscapes, the obstructive, dirt-spraying helicopter (only from the driver's view), the rockin' guitar-laden music, and accurate sound effects, but you'll either love or hate *Rally*'s control. Dirt-road racing requires a fairly steep learning curve and *Rally*'s control realistically reflects this difference. Once reigned in, however, the sensitive steering control and heavy sliding action become the game's strongest asset and its biggest difference from other racers.

Rally's downside is the car's indestructibility: no matter how much you slam into either opponents or banks, your racer (either the Lancia Delta or Toyota Celica) receives not a scratch, nor can you flip or leave the road (because you'd never finish the race). And some might say the car's control is a fault, too: our response? Keep practicing, buddy.

Rating: ★★★★★

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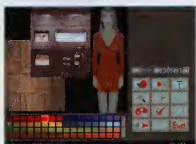
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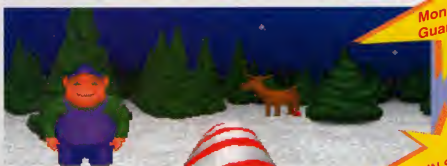
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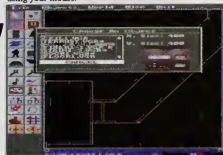
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 ng special An audience with Gunpei Yokoi, the inventor of Nintendo's Virtual Boy and GameBoy
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- talking Steve Race (Sony Computer Entertainment's President & CEO)
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- talking Sam Tramiel: Atari talks back (Atari's President & CEO)
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Go on, do the write thing

I just called the Saturn number (1-800-see-saturn) and I must say the people at Sega are a bunch of liars! I asked them why the Saturn was so expensive, and they said, "Because it is such a high tech machine." I believe that, but when I asked them to compare it to the Ultra 64 or the PlayStation, they said, "The Saturn has 32-bit processors with five coprocessors, which makes it 128 bit." That was either ignorance or a blatant lie.

Next, I called 1-800-usa-sega and asked them why all the good games are coming out for SNES, such as *Killer Instinct*. They said that *Killer Instinct* was coming out for the Sega systems! If that's not a lie, what the heck is?

A future *Ultra 64* owner, Phil Kurby
MasterPK1@aol.com

It's a lie. We rang the same number to check your story Phil, and we were told exactly the same information. **NEXT Generation** readers, take note. Congratulations Sega — you've just lost the trust of more than 100,000 potential Saturn owners.

I own a Japanese Neo-Geo CD system. On the Neo-Geo mailing list, SNK's own gamelord (a regular info-monger) has informed us that the American CD system will be double speed, or something like 175% speed. Now we have a bit of a compatibility argument going on.

For different speed CD drives, is there a difference in the way the CD has to be programmed? Or does a faster drive simply result in a faster loading time? Some say the

games need to be reformatted for double speed, others say not.

Of course, the reason I am thinking about this, aside from curiosity, is my lack of desire to own a Japanese system that I can't play domestic games on (if I wanted that, I would have bought a Japanese Saturn or PS-X). I don't want to have to order games forever, particularly when no one would want to carry a Japanese game, especially when the same game is out domestically for less money.

Sean
srohde@sun1.iusb.
indiana.edu

There are times when software will be optimized to account for the speed of the CD drive it's destined to be played on, but SNK ensures us that the US Neo-Geo CD has not prompted one of those times. The official word from SNK is that all Neo-Geo CD software will run on all Neo-Geo CD players, regardless of CD speed.

I have a question about the 3DO M2. Is it really supposed to speed up older games? And if so, will the acceleration be adjustable? Some games could use more speeding up than others (*Road Rash* vs. *Need for Speed*). Also, in *NG 6*, you stated that the 32X game: *Golf Magazine Presents 36 Great Holes Starring Fred Couples* was a 15 syllable title... it's 16. Don't let it happen again!

Darryl
cn1904@abaco.
coastalnet.com

Let us clear this issue up. You're not alone, Darryl, in thinking that 3DO's M2 "accelerator" will

enhance the speed of existing 3DO titles, but this isn't actually the case. The M2 is essentially an entirely new computer which happens to have an old 3DO player built into it — in the real sense of the word, they aren't compatible with each other at all. So, M2 will play existing 3DO titles just as a current 3DO player would, and it will also play dedicated M2 titles — that's all.

In my humble opinion there are three main ingredients to a video/computer game: gameplay, graphics, and sound. One major technological advance that has recently occurred with videogames is the use of Dolby Surround Sound. There is no question that by immersing the player in a virtual world of 3D sound, the gaming experience is significantly enhanced.

The only games that I am aware of that use this technology are for 3DO. Is there any particular reason why gaming magazines, including yours, have failed to review the surround capabilities of many of the 3DO games? As a result, you have failed to address 1/3 of the gaming experience, failed to review the full capabilities of the games, and failed to recognize a true technical achievement. Here are some 3DO games in surround, most of which you have reviewed: *Road Rash*, *Shockwave*, *Shockwave: Operation Jump Gate*, *Need For Speed*, *FIFA Soccer*, and *Return Fire*.

Please continue providing in-depth interviews with industry's thinking leaders. I would be very interested in seeing someone from Electronic Arts or Origin Systems. Please

do not get side-scroller envy. Keep up the great work!

Allan Chaney
BVBMB31A@prodigy.com

We'll be running a feature on sound in games in a future issue. We'll also be running an interview with someone from Electronic Arts soon.

Electronic Gaming Monthly is much better than your magazine. Except yours has better quality pictures. You should change the way your magazine looks.

Archbaldo@aol.com

A comedian, ladies and gentlemen.

I wanted to write and tell you that I was very impressed with your article on Nintendo's Ultra 64. It helped in separating the facts from the rumors about the system.

The biggest thing I would like to see changed in **NEXT Generation** is your previews on upcoming arcade games. It seems like the only time you show arcade games are during your reviews in the final section. Gamers just don't want to know about arcade games when they're released, but also before — especially the ones that'll most likely grab their attention. For example, while all the other gaming magazines showed previews of *Mortal Kombat 3* with actual screen shots, you only had a drawing and a short paragraph on the game in the Arcadia section in the April issue. You should expand the Arcadia section to a few more pages and include more previews (and pictures) of the arcade games

that players might enjoy playing. Your previews in Arcadia, with its one page of paragraphs and just three pictures, is a little weak. Even if you don't expand the Arcadia section, include a bigger arcade section in your alphas.

Ming Lau
9133 Ranch Meadows
Jennings, MO 63136

Thanks for your observations Ming. Marcus Webb's Arcadia column isn't supposed to be merely previews and reviews of games, but more of a look at the arcade industry as a whole; very often the coin-op business is the birth of trends, innovations, and sometimes even controversies that have profound effects on the home console business.

And we think that our coverage of the coin-op scene has been OK. *Sega Championship Rally*, *Virtua Fighter 2*, *Tekken*, *Ace Driver*... **NEXT Generation** has been first with the news on all of these games. Of course, there's still room for improvement. Perhaps when we have more room (expect 180 plus page issues toward the end of the year), we can expand our arcade coverage.

I'd like to point out an error in your April 1995 issue [NG 4]. On page 63, on the left side, you show a photo of a motion platform and state in the body of the article it is something Looking Glass Software is working on for future development. Let me set the record straight; that 6-DOF motion platform was developed solely by myself and now a product of ViRtogo Incorporated of Chicago, IL.

My motion platforms are all pneumatically actuated, differing in size and method of control. There are two sizes, a single seat and a two-seater, there are various options of visual displays and seating arrangements for each one. I have also developed a unique approach to motion control and use of motion.

The reason I had a motion platform at Looking Glass Software is for the most obvious method of control, interactivity. By coincidence, I met Seamus Blackly at the "Summer '94" CES

Show while Looking Glass was featuring a prerelease presentation of *Flight Unlimited*. Upon meeting Seamus and I immediately conspired to put motion to *Flight Unlimited* as soon as practical. I believe our enthusiasm was slightly ahead of schedule but we plan to continue with the project as soon as *Flight Unlimited* is released. Incidentally, at the show I won the "1994 Innovations" award for "Design and Innovation" in the Multi-Media category from CES.

Bradley Engstrand
Chairman, ViRtogo Inc
Chicago, IL
(312) 281 6435

Thanks Bradley. Good luck with your future innovations.

In response to Maxfield Sasser's letter in NG 5 in which he makes a reference to "those newfangled-never-touched-a-sound-chip CD weenies." What is your problem? You sound like an old coot complaining about how easy the youngsters have it today. I know that CD-based music isn't always practical or even possible for some games that can't sacrifice the disk access during gameplay.

However, CD-based music, when used, provides greater musical freedom in terms of size and sounds, as well as providing more accurate reproduction of instrument and vocal sounds. While newer sound chips may be making vast improvements over the quality of their predecessors, nothing can replace the sound of a real instrument. So why don't you just let musicians just be musicians instead of programmers, because it's the finished product that counts, not what medium is used to deliver it.

And finally, thanks to the nameless person who submitted the information about the Ringling School of Art and Design. I think I'm going to check that place out. Your readers should also take a look at Full Sail Center for the Recording Arts, which recently augmented its existing audio and film programs with an equally impressive digital media program. The center used SGI workstations with Alias software, as well as

Macintoshes, and the often-neglected Amiga and Lightwave.

You can call 1-800-CAN-ROCK for more information.

Ryan Eibling
Valdosta, GA

Thanks for the suggestion.

I have a complaint. Of the five issues of **NEXT Generation** published so far, not an issue has gone by without Sega's 32X being trashed in one way or another.

I find the 32X to be an excellent system. My main reason for buying the 32X was the fact that it was designed as an upgrade to an already existing system. Considering the large base of Genesis users, I don't think Sega would want to do to them what Nintendo did to NES users when the company came out with the SNES. And it's most likely Nintendo will do the same again to SNES users when it comes out with the Ultra 64.

Price was another factor in choosing the 32X as well. Not all gamers can afford, as in my case, to pay \$350 to \$450 for a game system. As I see it, that's too much money to pay. For the money, the 32X does the job and does it well.

In terms of software, you need to give the system a chance. Initial software released for any new system never fully utilizes the system's capabilities.

Overall, I find the 32X a promising system. To paraphrase an old Atari slogan, the 32X offers 32-bit power without the price. While the 32X might not be a powerhouse in the battle of the next generation systems, remember one thing: Battles are not always won by the swiftest or the strongest.

James Catalan
Chicago, IL

All good points James, but we think — actually, looking at Sega's sales figures, we know — that you are in the minority.

With all the various consoles available on the market, mainly 3DO, Jaguar, and Sega 32X, why has there not been a high quality flight simulator released, like ones

released for PCs? When I walk through computer software outlets, I am amazed at the amount and quality of flight sims available for the PC, not to mention the multitude of peripherals available like joysticks and flight controls. Does this not demonstrate that there is a monstrous market for software of this genre?

I have found that it is mainly adults who purchase flight sims for their PCs. Most of the younger videogamers would rather play their *Mortal Kambats* and *Street Fighters* as opposed to learning the intricacies of flight. Do 3DO, Jaguar, Sega, and Nintendo believe that their user base is strictly under 16 years old? I think not.

Three years ago I was captivated by *Pilot Wings* on the SNES and thought that there could be only bigger and better programs around the corner. Sadly this has not been the case. Oh! How I yearn.

Allan McKee
Nanaimo, BC, Canada

Calm down Allan. You correctly identify one of the major problems preventing the widespread development of flight sims for consoles, namely, the lack of any real audience for them, but there are a few more:

1) The standard PC keyboard has 101 keys with which to manipulate all the "airplane's" controls. Consoles have typically had just a three-button joystick.

2) While consoles have the power to run flight sims, the complicated 3D world prevents the graphics from ever looking as lush as a 2D fighting/platform game. And bad/simple looking games don't sell. A shame, but that's the way it is.

3) Consoles were invented in the first place to cater for gamers who wanted that instant "pick-up-and-play" arcade experience at home. Flight sims often take days or even weeks to learn how to play properly, and thus aren't typically popular with those gamers who like consoles.

One piece of good news is that *Pilot Wings 2* is rumored to be in development for Nintendo's Ultra 64.



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